This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

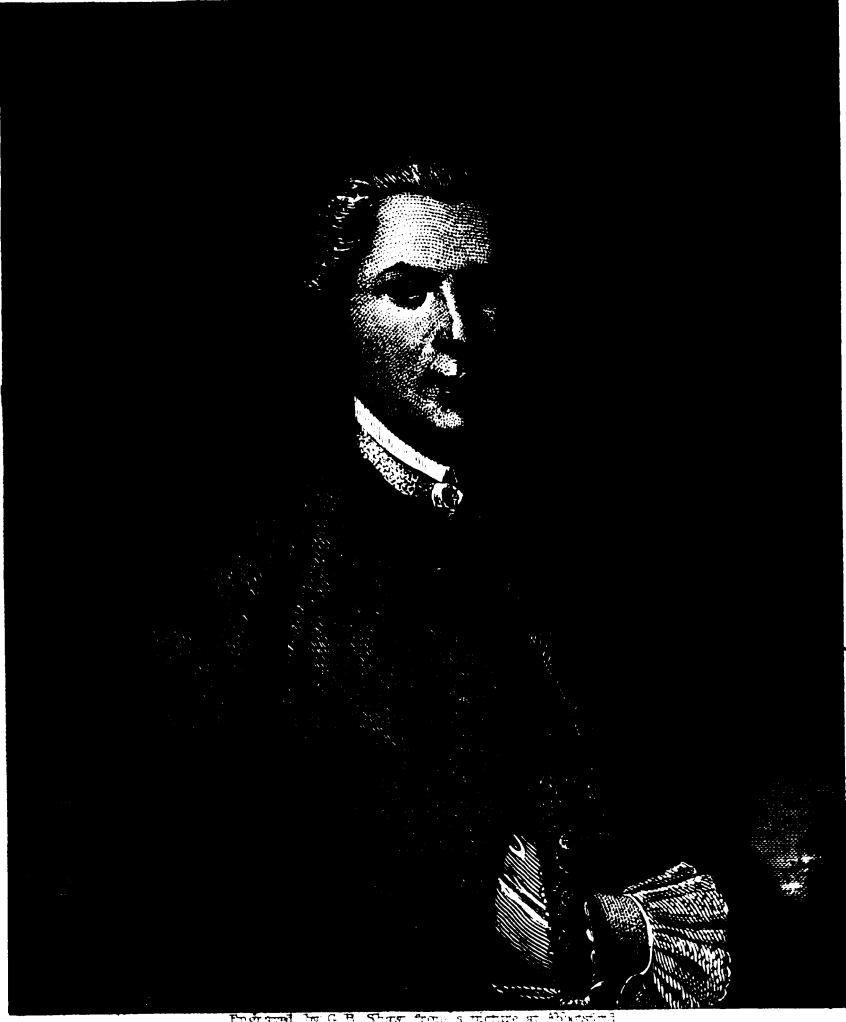
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

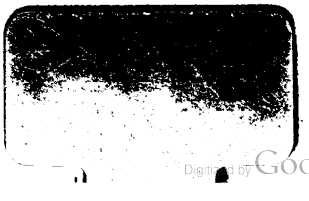


Memoirs of Sir Walter Scott

John Gibson Lockhart, Joseph Mallord William Turner

Digitized by Google

KD26802



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

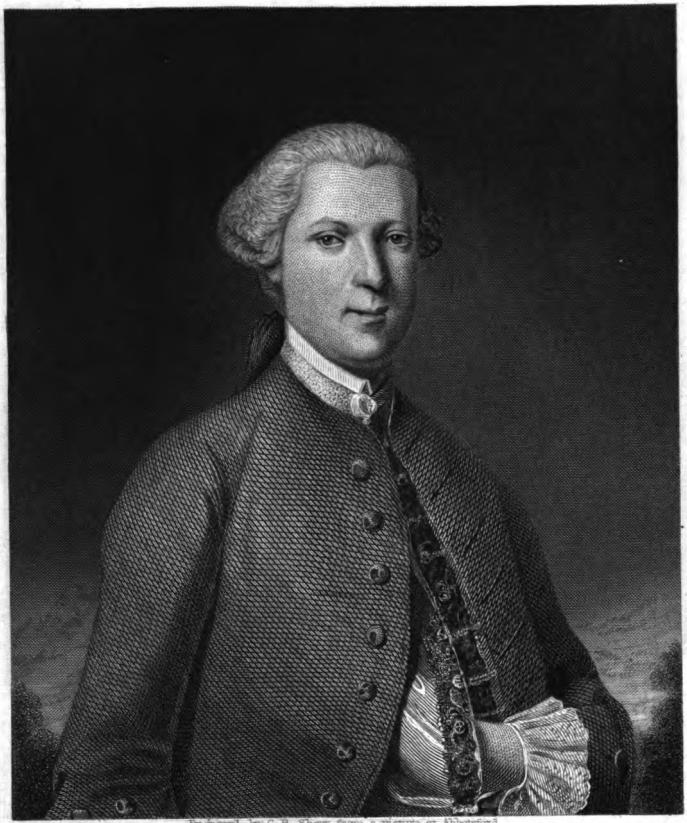
Digitized by Google

Memoirs of Scott

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google



Engraved by G.B. Shaw from a picture at Abbotsford.

WALTER SCOTT.

Written at the Request
of Sir Walter Scott Bart.

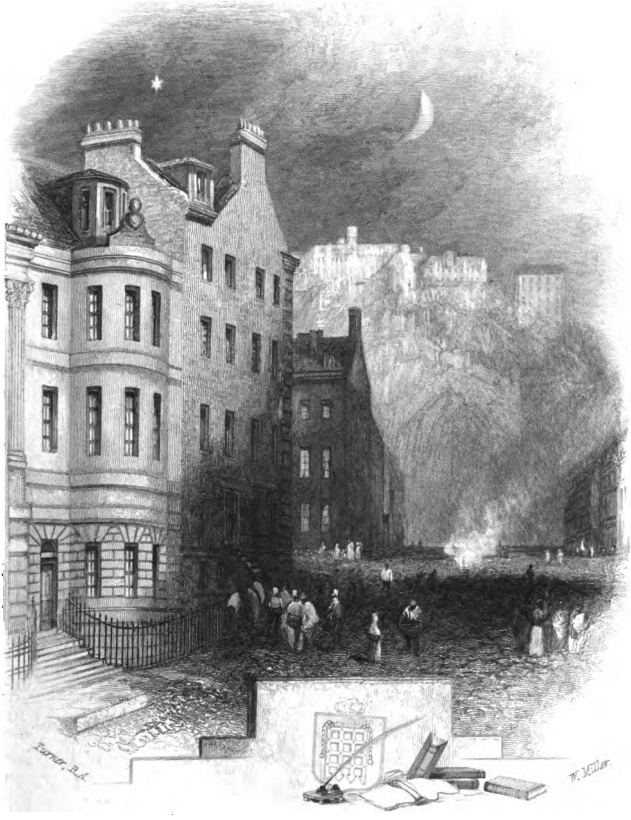
Digitized by Google

A. & C. BLACK, EDINBURGH.
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

LIFE
OF
SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

VOL. IV.



No. 39, Castle Street, Edinburgh.
The town Residence of Sir Walter Scott, for upwards of Twenty Five Years.

A. & C. BLACK, EDINBURGH
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Memoirs

OF

Sir Walter Scott

BY

J. G. LOCKHART

VOL. IV.

EDINBURGH
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK
1882

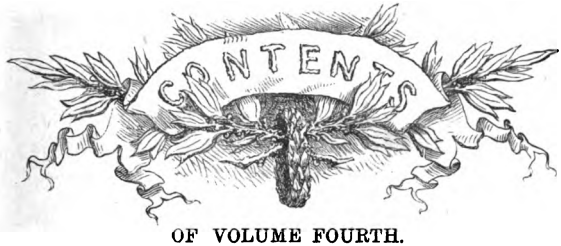
Digitized by Google

KD26802

HARVARD
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY
Sept 10, 1946

Exchange of
Albert Mathews

Digitized by Google



OF VOLUME FOURTH.

CHAPTER XXV.

PAGE

The "Flitting" to Abbotsford — Plantations — George Thomson — Rokeby and Triermain in progress — Excursion to Flodden — Bishop-Auckland — and Rokeby Park — Correspondence with Crabbe — Life of Patrick Carey, &c. — Publication of Rokeby — and of the Bridal of Triermain 1812–1813, 1

CHAPTER XXVI.

Affairs of John Ballantyne and Co. — Causes of their derangement — Letters of Scott to his Partners — Negotiation for relief with Messrs Constable — New purchase of Land at Abbotsford — Embarrassments continued — John Ballantyne's Expresses — Drumlanrig — Penrith, &c. — Scott's meeting with the Marquis of Abercorn at Longtown — His application to the Duke of Buccleuch—Offer of the Poet-Laureateship — considered — and declined— Address of the City of Edinburgh to the Prince-Regent—

Digitized by Google

PAGE
its reception —Civic Honours conferred on Scott — Question of Taxation on Literary Income — Letters to Mr Morritt — Mr Southey — Mr Richardson — Mr Crabbe — Miss Baillie, and Lord Byron.....1813, 75

CHAPTER XXVII.

Insanity of Henry Weber — Letters on the Abdication of Napoleon, &c. — Publication of Scott's Life and Edition of Swift — Essays for the Supplement to the Encyclopædia Britannica — Completion and Publication of Waverley.....1814, 140

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Voyage to the Shetland Isles, &c. — Scott's Diary kept on board the Lighthouse Yacht.....July and August 1814. 180

CHAPTER XXIX.

Diary on Board the Lighthouse Yacht continued — The Orkneys — Kirkwall — Hoy — The Standing Stones of Stennis, &c.....August 1814, 246

CHAPTER XXX.

Diary continued — Stromness — Bessy Millie's Charm — Cape Wrath — Cave of Smowe — The Hebrides — Scalpa, &c.....1814, 272

CHAPTER XXXI.

Diary continued—Isle of Harris—Monuments of the Chiefs of Macleod — Isle of Skye — Dunvegan Castle — Loch Corriskin — Macalister's Cave.....1814, 297

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXII.

PAGE
Diary continued—Cave of Egg — Iona — Staffa — Dunstaffnage—Dunluce Castle—Giant's Causeway—Isle of Arran, &c.—Diary concluded.....August—September, 1814. 319

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Letter in Verse from Zetland and Orkney — Death of the Duchess of Buccleuch — Correspondence with the Duke — Altrive Lake — Negotiation concerning the Lord of the Isles completed — Success of Waverley — Contemporaneous Criticisms on the Novel — Letters to Scott from Mr Morritt — Mr Lewis — and Miss Maclean Clephane— Letter from James Ballantyne to Miss Edgeworth—1814, 371

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

CHAPTER XXV.

The "Flitting" to Abbotsford — Plantations — George Thomson — Rokeby and Triermain in progress — Excursion to Flodden — Bishop-Auckland — and Rokeby Park — Correspondence with Crabbe — Life of Patrick Carey, &c. — Publication of Rokeby — and of the Bridal of Triermain.

1812–1813.

TOWARDS the end of May 1812, the Sheriff finally removed from Ashestiel to Abbotsford. The day when this occurred was a sad one for many a poor neighbour—for they lost, both in him and his wife,

Digitized by Google

very generous protectors. In such a place, among the few evils which counterbalance so many good things in the condition of the peasantry, the most afflicting is the want of access to medical advice. As far as their means and skill would go, they had both done their utmost to supply this want; and Mrs Scott, in particular, had made it so much her business to visit the sick in their scattered cottages, and bestowed on them the contents of her medicine-chest as well as of the larder and cellar, with such unwearied kindness, that her name is never mentioned there to this day without some expression of tenderness. Scott's children remember the parting scene as one of unmixed affliction—but it had had, as we shall see, its lighter features.

Among the many amiable English friends whom he owed to his frequent visits at Rokeby Park, there was, I believe, none that had a higher place in his regard than the late Anne Lady Alvanley, the widow of the celebrated Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas. He was fond of female society in general; but her ladyship was a woman after his heart; well born, and highly bred, but without the slightest tinge of the frivolities of modern fashion; soundly informed, and a warm lover of literature and the arts, but holding in as great horror as himself the imbecile chatter and affected ecstasies of the bluestocking generation. Her ladyship had written to him early in May, by Miss Sarah Smith (now

Digitized by Google

Mrs Bartley), whom I have already mentioned as one of his theatrical favourites; and his answer contains, among other matters, a sketch of the "Forest Flitting."

"*To the Right Honourable Lady Alvanley.*

"Ashestiel, 25th May 1812.

"I was honoured, my dear Lady Alvanley, by the kind letter which you sent me with our friend Miss Smith, whose talents are, I hope, receiving at Edinburgh the full meed of honourable applause which they so highly merit. It is very much against my will that I am forced to speak of them by report alone, for this being the term of removing, I am under the necessity of being at this farm to superintend the transference of my goods and chattels, a most miscellaneous collection, to a small property, about five miles down the Tweed, which I purchased last year. The neighbours have been much delighted with the procession of my furniture, in which old swords, bows, targets, and lances, made a very conspicuous show. A family of turkeys was accommodated within the helmet of some *preux* chevalier of ancient Border fame; and the very cows, for aught I know, were bearing banners and muskets. I assure your ladyship that this caravan, attended by a dozen of ragged rosy peasant children, carrying fishing-rods and spears, and leading poneys, greyhounds,

Digitized by Google

and spaniels, would, as it crossed the Tweed, have furnished no bad subject for the pencil, and really reminded me of one of the gypsey groupes of Callot upon their march.

"Edinburgh, 28th May

"I have got here at length, and had the pleasure to hear Miss Smith speak the Ode on the Passions charmingly last night. It was her benefit, and the house was tolerable, though not so good as she deserves, being a very good girl, as well as an excellent performer.

"I have read Lord Byron with great pleasure, though pleasure is not quite the appropriate word. I should say admiration—mixed with regret, that the author should have adopted such an unamiable misanthropical tone.—The reconciliation with Holland-house is extremely edifying, and may teach young authors to be in no hurry to exercise their satirical vein. I remember an honest old Presbyterian, who thought it right to speak with respect even of the devil himself, since no one knew in what corner he might one day want a friend. But Lord Byron is young, and certainly has great genius, and has both time and capacity to make amends for his errors. I wonder if he will pardon the Edinburgh reviewers, who have read their recantation of their former strictures.

"Mrs Scott begs to offer her kindest and most

Digitized by Google

respectful compliments to your ladyship and the young ladies. I hope we shall get into Yorkshire this season to see Morritt: he and his lady are really delightful persons. Believe me, with great respect, dear Lady Alvanley, your much honoured and obliged WALTER SCOTT."

A week later, in answer to a letter, mentioning the approach of the celebrated sale of books in which the Roxburghe Club originated, Scott says to his trusty ally, Daniel Terry:—

"Edinburgh, 9th June 1812.

"My Dear Terry

"I wish you joy of your success, which although all reports state it as most highly flattering, does not exceed what I had hoped for you. I think I shall do you a sensible pleasure in requesting that you will take a walk over the fields to Hampstead one of these fine days, and deliver the enclosed to my friend Miss Baillie, with whom, I flatter myself, you will be much pleased, as she has all the simplicity of real genius. I mentioned to her some time ago, that I wished to make you acquainted, so that the sooner you can call upon her, the compliment will be the more gracious. As I suppose you will sometimes look in at the Roxburghe sale, a memorandum respecting any remarkable articles will be a great favour.

Digitized by Google

"Abbotsford was looking charming, when I was obliged to mount my wheel in this court, too fortunate that I have at length some share in the roast meat I am daily engaged in turning. Our flitting and removal from Ashestiel baffled all description; we had twenty-four cart-loads of the veriest trash in nature, besides dogs, pigs, poneys, poultry, cows, calves, bare-headed wenches, and bare-breeched boys. In other respects we are going on in the old way, only poor Percy is dead. I intend to have an old stone set up by his grave, with '*Cy gist li preux Percie,*' and I hope future antiquaries will debate which hero of the house of Northumberland has left his bones in Teviotdale.* Believe me yours very truly, WALTER SCOTT."

This was one of the busiest summers of Scott's busy life. Till the 12th of July he was at his post in the Court of Session five days every week; but every Saturday evening found him at Abbotsford, to observe the progress his labourers had made within doors and without in his absence; and on Monday night he returned to Edinburgh. Even before the Summer Session commenced, he appears to have made some advance in his Rokeby, for he writes to Mr Morritt, from Abbotsford, on the 4th of May—

* The epitaph of this favourite greyhound may be seen on the edge of the bank, a little way below the house of Abbotsford.

Digitized by Google

"As for the house and the poem, there are twelve masons hammering at the one, and one poor noddle at the other—so they are both in progress";—and his literary labours throughout the long vacation were continued under the same sort of disadvantage. That autumn he had, in fact, no room at all for himself. The only parlour which had been hammered into anything like habitable condition, served at once for dining-room, drawing-room, school-room, and study. A window looking to the river was kept sacred to his desk; an old bed-curtain was nailed up across the room close behind his chair, and there, whenever the spade, the dibble, or the chisel (for he took his full share in all the work on hand) was laid aside, he pursued his poetical tasks, apparently undisturbed and unannoyed by the surrounding confusion of masons and carpenters, to say nothing of the lady's small talk, the children's babble among themselves, or their repetition of their lessons. The truth no doubt was, that when at his desk he did little more, as far as regarded *poetry*, than write down the lines which he had fashioned in his mind while pursuing his vocation as a planter, upon that bank which received originally, by way of joke, the title of *the thicket*. "I am now," he says to Ellis (Oct. 17), "adorning a patch of naked land with trees *facturis nepotibus umbram*, for I shall never live to enjoy their shade myself otherwise than in the recumbent posture of Tityrus or Menalcas."

Digitized by Google

But he did live to see *the thicket* deserve not only that name, but a nobler one; and to fell with his own hand many a well-grown tree that he had planted there.

Another plantation of the same date, by his eastern boundary, was less successful. For this he had asked and received from his early friend, the Marchioness of Stafford, a supply of acorns from Trentham, and it was named in consequence *Sutherland bower;* but the field-mice, in the course of the ensuing winter, contrived to root up and devour the whole of her ladyship's goodly benefaction. A third space had been set apart, and duly enclosed, for the reception of some Spanish chestnuts offered to him by an admirer established in merchandise at Seville; but that gentleman had not been a very knowing ally as to such matters, for when the chestnuts arrived, it turned out that they had been boiled.

Scott writes thus to Terry, in September, while the Roxburghe sale was still going on:—

"I have lacked your assistance, my dear sir, for twenty whimsicalities this autumn. Abbotsford, as you will readily conceive, has considerably changed its face since the auspices of Mother Retford were exchanged for ours. We have got up a good garden wall, complete stables in the haugh, according to Stark's plan, and the old farm yard being enclosed with a wall, with some little picturesque additions

Digitized by Google

in front, has much relieved the stupendous height of the Doctor's barn. The new plantations have thriven amazingly well, the acorns are coming up fast, and Tom Purdie is the happiest and most consequential person in the world. My present work is building up the well with some *debris* from the Abbey. O for your assistance, for I am afraid we shall make but a botched job of it, especially as our materials are of a very miscellaneous complexion. The worst of all is, that while my trees grow and my fountain fills, my purse, in an inverse ratio, sinks to zero. This last circumstance will, I fear, make me a very poor guest at the literary entertainment your researches hold out for me. I should, however, like much to have the Treatise on Dreams, by the author of the New Jerusalem, which, as John Cuthbertson the smith said of the minister's sermon, must be neat work. The Loyal Poems by N. T.* are probably by poor Nahum Tate, who associated with Brady in versifying the Psalms, and more honourably with Dryden in the second part of Absalom and Achitophel. I never saw them, however, but would give a guinea or thirty shillings for the collection. Our friend John Ballantyne has, I learn, made a sudden sally to London, and doubtless you will crush a

* The Reverend Alexander Dyce says, "N. T. stands for *Nathaniel Thompson*, the Tory bookseller, who published these Loyal Poems." [1839.]

Digitized by Google

quart with him or a pottle pot; he will satisfy your bookseller for 'The Dreamer,' or any other little purchase you may recommend for me. You have pleased Miss Baillie very much both in public and in society, and though not fastidious, she is not, I think, particularly lavish of applause either way. A most valuable person is she, and as warm-hearted as she is brilliant.—Mrs Scott and all our little folks are well. I am relieved of the labour of hearing Walter's lesson by a gallant son of the church, who with one leg of wood, and another of oak, walks to and fro from Melrose every day for that purpose. Pray stick to the dramatic work,* and never suppose either that you can be intrusive, or that I can be uninterested in whatever concerns you. Yours, W. S."

The tutor alluded to at the close of this letter was Mr George Thomson, son of the minister of Melrose, who, when the house afforded better accommodation, was and continued for many years to be domesticated at Abbotsford. Scott had always a particular tenderness towards persons afflicted with any bodily misfortune; and Thomson, whose leg had been amputated in consequence of a rough casualty of his boyhood, had a special share in his favour from the high spirit with which he refused at the

* An edition of the British Dramatists had, I believe, been projected by Mr Terry.

Digitized by Google

time to betray the name of the companion that had occasioned his mishap, and continued ever afterwards to struggle against its disadvantages. Tall, vigorous, athletic, a dauntless horseman, and expert at the singlestick, George formed a valuable as well as picturesque addition to the *tail* of the new laird, who often said, "In the Dominie, like myself, accident has spoiled a capital lifeguardsman." His many oddities and eccentricities in no degree interfered with the respect due to his amiable feelings, upright principles, and sound learning; nor did *Dominie Thamson* at all quarrel in after times with the universal credence of the neighbourhood that he had furnished many features for the inimitable personage whose designation so nearly resembled his own; and if he has not yet "wagged his head" in a "pulpit o' his ain," he well knows it has not been so for want of earnest and long-continued intercession on the part of the author of Guy Mannering.*

For many years Scott had accustomed himself to proceed in the composition of poetry along with that of prose essays of various descriptions; but it is a remarkable fact that he chose this period of perpetual noise and bustle, when he had not even a summer-house to himself, for the new experiment of

* Mr Thomson died 8th January 1838, before the publication of the first edition of these Memoirs had been completed.—[1839.]

Digitized by Google

carrying on two poems at the same time—and this too without suspending the heavy labour of his edition of Swift, to say nothing of the various lesser matters in which the Ballantynes were, from day to day, calling for the assistance of his judgment and his pen. In the same letter in which William Erskine acknowledges the receipt of the first four pages of Rokeby, he adverts also to the Bridal of Triermain as being already in rapid progress. The fragments of this second poem, inserted in the Register of the preceding year, had attracted considerable notice; the secret of their authorship had been well kept; and by some means, even in the shrewdest circles of Edinburgh, the belief had become prevalent that they proceeded not from Scott but from Erskine. Scott had no sooner completed his bargain as to the copyright of the unwritten Rokeby, than he resolved to pause from time to time in its composition, and weave those fragments into a shorter and lighter romance, executed in a different metre, and to be published anonymously, in a small pocket volume, as nearly as possible on the same day with the avowed quarto. He expected great amusement from the comparisons which the critics would no doubt indulge themselves in drawing between himself and this humble candidate; and Erskine good-humouredly entered into the scheme, undertaking to do nothing which should effectually suppress the notion of his

Digitized by Google

having set himself up as a modest rival to his friend. Nay, he suggested a further refinement, which in the sequel had no small share in the success of this little plot upon the sagacity of the reviewers. Having said that he much admired the opening of the first canto of Rokeby, Erskine adds, "I shall request your *accoucheur* to send me your *little Dugald* too as he gradually makes his progress. What I have seen is delightful. You are aware how difficult it is to form any opinion of a work, the general plan of which is unknown, transmitted merely in legs and wings as they are formed and feathered. Any remarks must be of the most minute and superficial kind, confined chiefly to the language, and other such subordinate matters. I shall be very much amused if the secret is kept and the knowing ones taken in. To prevent any discovery from your prose, what think you of putting down your ideas of what the preface ought to contain, and allowing me to write it over? And perhaps a quizzing review might be concocted."

This last hint was welcome; and among other parts of the preface to Thiermain which threw out "the knowing ones," certain Greek quotations interspersed in it are now accounted for. Scott, on his part, appears to have studiously interwoven into the piece allusions to personal feelings and experiences more akin to his friend's history and character than to his own; and he did so still more largely, when

Digitized by Google

repeating this experiment, in the introductory parts of Harold the Dauntless.

The same post which conveyed William Erskine's letter above quoted, brought him an equally wise and kind one from Mr Morritt, in answer to a fresh application for some minute details about the scenery and local traditions of the Valley of the Tees. Scott had promised to spend part of this autumn at Rokeby Park himself; but now, busied as he was with his planting operations at home, and continually urged by Ballantyne to have the poem ready for publication by Christmas, he would willingly have trusted his friend's knowledge in place of his own observation and research. Mr Morritt gave him in reply various particulars, which I need not here repeat, but added—"I am really sorry, my dear Scott, at your abandonment of your kind intention of visiting Rokeby—and my sorrow is not quite selfish—for seriously, I wish you could have come, if but for a few days, in order, on the spot, to settle accurately in your mind the localities of the new poem, and all their petty circumstances, of which there are many that would give interest and ornament to your descriptions. I am too much flattered by your proposal of inscribing the poem to me, not to accept it with gratitude and pleasure. I shall always feel your friendship as an honour—we all wish our honours to be permanent—and yours promises mine at least

Digitized by Google

a fair chance of immortality. I hope, however, you will not be obliged to write in a hurry on account of the impatience of your booksellers. They are, I think, ill advised in their proceeding, for surely the book will be the more likely to succeed from not being forced prematurely into this critical world. Do not be persuaded to risk your established fame on this hazardous experiment. If you want a few hundreds independent of these booksellers, your credit is so very good, now that you have got rid of your Old Man of the Sea, that it is no great merit to trust you, and I happen at this moment to have five or six for which I have no sort of demand—so rather than be obliged to spur Pegasus beyond the power of pulling him up when he is going too fast, do consult your own judgment and set the midwives of the trade at defiance. Don't be scrupulous to the disadvantage of your muse, and above all be not offended at me for a proposition which is meant in the true spirit of friendship. I am more than ever anxious for your success—the Lady of the Lake more than succeeded —I think Don Roderick is less popular—I want this work to be another Lady at the least. Surely it would be worth your while for such an object to spend a week of your time, and a portion of your Old Man's salary, in a mail-coach flight hither, were it merely to renew your acquaintance with the country, and to rectify the little misconceptions of a cursory view. Ever affectionately yours—J. B. S. M."

Digitized by Google

This appeal was not to be resisted. Scott, I believe, accepted Mr Morritt's friendly offer so far as to ask his assistance in having some of Ballantyne's bills discounted: and he proceeded the week after to Rokeby, by the way of Flodden and Hexham, travelling on horseback, his eldest boy and girl on their poneys, while Mrs Scott followed them in the carriage. Two little incidents that diversified this ride through Northumberland have found their way into print already; but, as he was fond of telling them both down to the end of his days, I must give them a place here also. Halting at Flodden to expound the field of battle to his young folks, he found that Marmion had, as might have been expected, benefitted the keeper of the public house there very largely; and the village Boniface, overflowing with gratitude, expressed his anxiety to have a *Scott's Head* for his sign-post. The poet demurred to this proposal, and assured mine host that nothing could be more appropriate than the portraiture of a foaming tankard, which already surmounted his door-way. "Why, the painter-man has not made an ill job," said the landlord, "but I would fain have something more connected with the book that has brought me so much good custom." He produced a well-thumbed copy, and handing it to the author, begged he would at least suggest a motto from the tale of Flodden Field. Scott opened the book at the death scene of the hero,

Digitized by Google

and his eye was immediately caught by the "inscription" in black letter—

"Drink, weary pilgrim, drink, and pray
For the kind soul of Sibyl Grey," &c.

"Well, my friend," said he, "what more would you have? You need but strike out one letter in the first of these lines, and make your painter-man, the next time he comes this way, print between the jolly tankard and your own name—

"Drink, weary pilgrim, drink and PAY."

Scott was delighted to find, on his return, that this suggestion had been adopted, and for aught I know, the romantic legend may still be visible.

The other story I shall give in the words of Mr Gillies. "It happened at a small country town that Scott suddenly required medical advice for one of his servants, and, on enquiring if there was any doctor at the place, was told that there was two—one long established, and the other a new comer. The latter gentleman, being luckily found at home, soon made his appearance;—a grave, sagacious-looking personage, attired in black, with a shovel hat, in whom, to his utter astonishment, Sir Walter recognised a Scotch blacksmith, who had formerly practised, with tolerable success, as a veterinary operator in the

Digitized by Google

neighbourhood of Ashestiel.—'How, in all the world!' exclaimed he, 'can it be possible that this is John Lundie?'—'In troth is it, your honour—just *a' that's for him.*'—'Well, but let us hear; you were a *horse*-doctor before; now, it seems, you are a *man*-doctor; how do you get on?'—'Ou, just extraordinar weel; for your honour maun ken my practice is vera sure and orthodox. I depend entirely upon twa *simples.*'—'And what may their names be? Perhaps it is a secret?'—'I'll tell your honour,' in a low tone; 'my twa simples are just *laudamy* and *calamy!*'—'Simples with a vengeance!' replied Scott. 'But John, do you never happen to *kill* any of your patients?'—'Kill? Ou ay, may be sae! Whiles they die, and whiles no; but it's the will o' Providence. *Ony how, your honour, it wad be lang before it makes up for Flodden!*'" *

It was also in the course of this expedition that Scott first made acquaintance with the late excellent and venerable Shute Barrington, Bishop of Durham. The travellers having reached Auckland over night, were seeing the public rooms of the Castle at an early hour next morning, when the Bishop happened, in passing through one of them, to catch a glimpse of Scott's person, and immediately recognising him, from the likeness of the engravings by this time mul-

* Reminiscences of Sir Walter Scott, p. 56.

Digitized by Google

tiplied, introduced himself to the party, and insisted upon acting as cicerone. After showing them the picture-gallery and so forth, his Lordship invited them to join the morning service of the chapel, and when that was over, insisted on their remaining to breakfast. But Scott and his Lordship were by this time so much pleased with each other that they could not part so easily. The good Bishop ordered his horse, nor did Scott observe without admiration the proud curvetting of the animal on which his Lordship proposed to accompany him during the next stage of his progress. "Why, yes, Mr Scott," said the gentle but high-spirited old man, "I still like to feel my horse under me." He was then in his 79th year, and survived to the age of ninety-two, the model in all things of a real prince of the Church. They parted after a ride of ten miles, with mutual regret; and on all subsequent rides in that direction, Bishop-Auckland was one of the poet's regular halting places.

At Rokeby, on this occasion, Scott remained about a week; and I transcribe the following brief account of his proceedings while there from Mr Morritt's *Memorandum:*—"I had, of course," he says, "had many previous opportunities of testing the almost conscientious fidelity of his local descriptions; but I could not help being singularly struck with the lights which this visit threw on that characteristic of his

Digitized by Google

compositions. The morning after he arrived he said, 'You have often given me materials for romance—now I want a good robber's cave and an old church of the right sort.' We rode out, and he found what he wanted in the ancient slate quarries of Brignal and the ruined Abbey of Eggleston. I observed him noting down even the peculiar little wild flowers and herbs that accidentally grew round and on the side of a bold crag near his intended cave of Guy Denzil; and could not help saying, that as he was not to be upon oath in his work, daisies, violets, and primroses would be as poetical as any of the humble plants he was examining. I laughed, in short, at his scrupulousness; but I understood him when he replied, 'that in nature herself no two scenes were exactly alike, and that whoever copied truly what was before his eyes, would possess the same variety in his descriptions, and exhibit apparently an imagination as boundless as the range of nature in the scenes he recorded; whereas—whoever trusted to imagination, would soon find his own mind circumscribed, and contracted to a few favourite images, and the repetition of these would sooner or later produce that very monotony and barrenness which had always haunted descriptive poetry in the hands of any but the patient worshippers of truth. Besides which,' he said, 'local names and peculiarities make a fictitious story look so much better in the face.' In fact, from his boyish habits, he was

Digitized by Google

but half satisfied with the most beautiful scenery when he could not connect with it some local legend, and when I was forced sometimes to confess with the Knife-grinder, 'Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir'—he would laugh and say, 'then let us make one—nothing so easy as to make a tradition.'" Mr Morritt adds, that he had brought with him about half the bridal of Triermain—told him that he meant to bring it out the same week with Rokeby—and promised himself particular satisfaction in *laying a trap for Jeffrey;* who, however, as we shall see, escaped the snare.

Some of the following letters will show with what rapidity, after having refreshed and stored his memory with the localities of Rokeby, he proceeded in the composition of the romance:—

"*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq.*

"Abbotsford, 12th October 1812.

"My Dear Morritt,

"I have this morning returned from Dalkeith House, to which I was whisked amid the fury of an election tempest, and I found your letter on my table. More on such a subject cannot be said among friends who give each other credit for feeling as they ought.

"We peregrinated over Stanmore, and visited the

Digitized by Google

Castles of Bowes, Brough, Appleby, and Brougham with great interest. Lest our spirit of chivalry thus excited should lack employment, we found ourselves, that is, *I* did, at Carlisle, engaged in the service of two distressed ladies, being no other than our friends Lady Douglas and Lady Louisa Stuart, who overtook us there, and who would have had great trouble in finding quarters, the election being in full vigour, if we had not anticipated their puzzle, and secured a private house capable of holding us all. Some distress occurred, I believe, among the waiting damsels, whose case I had not so carefully considered, for I heard a sentimental exclamation — 'Am I to sleep with the greyhounds?' which I conceived to proceed from Lady Douglas's *suivante*, from the exquisite sensibility of tone with which it was uttered, especially as I beheld the fair one descend from the carriage with three half-bound volumes of a novel in her hand. Not having in my power to alleviate her woes, by offering her either a part or the whole of my own couch — '*Transeat*,' quoth I, '*cum cæteris erroribus*.'

"I am delighted with your Cumberland admirer,* and give him credit for his visit to the vindicator of

* This alluded to a ridiculous hunter of lions, who being met by Mr Morritt in the grounds at Rokeby, disclaimed all taste for picturesque beauties, but overwhelmed their owner with Homeric Greek; of which he had told Scott.

Digitized by Google

Homer; but you missed one of another description, who passed Rokeby with great regret, I mean General John Malcolm, the Persian envoy, the Delhi resident, the poet, the warrior, the polite man, and the Borderer. He is really a fine fellow. I met him at Dalkeith, and we returned together; — he has just left me, after drinking his coffee. A fine time we had of it, talking of Troy town, and Babel, and Persepolis, and Delhi, and Langholm, and Burnfoot;* with all manner of episodes about Iskendiar, Rustan, and Johnnie Armstrong. Do you know, that poem of Ferdusi's must be beautiful. He read me some very splendid extracts which he had himself translated. Should you meet him in London, I have given him charge to be acquainted with you, for I am sure you will like each other. To be sure, I know him little, but I like his frankness and his sound ideas of morality and policy, and I have observed, that when I have had no great liking to persons at the beginning, it has usually pleased Heaven, as Slender says, to decrease it on further

* *Burnfoot* is the name of a farm-house on the Buccleuch estate, not far from Langholm, where the late Sir John Malcolm and his distinguished brothers were born. Their grandfather had, I believe, found refuge there after forfeiting a good estate and an ancient baronetcy in the *affair* of 1715. A monument to the gallant General's memory has recently been erected near the spot of his birth.

Digitized by Google

acquaintance. Adieu, I must mount my horse. Our last journey was so delightful that we have very temptation to repeat it. Pray give our kind love to the lady, and believe me ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT."

"*To the Same.*

"Edinburgh, 29th November 1812.

"My Dear Morritt,

"I have been, and still am, working very hard, in hopes to face the public by Christmas, and I think I have hitherto succeeded in throwing some interest into the piece. It is, however, a darker and more gloomy interest than I intended; but involving one's self with bad company, whether in fiction or in reality, is the way not to get out of it easily; so I have been obliged to bestow more pains and trouble upon Bertram, and one or two blackguards whom he picks up in the slate quarries, than what I originally designed. I am very desirous to have your opinion of the three first Cantos, for which purpose, so soon as I can get them collected, I will send the sheets under cover to Mr Freeling, whose omnipotent frank will transmit them to Rokeby, where, I presume, you have been long since comfortably settled—

'So York may overlook the town of York.'

3d King Henry VI. Act I. Scene 4.

Digitized by Google

"I trust you will read it with some partiality, because, if I have not been so successful as I could wish in describing your lovely and romantic glens, it has partly arisen from my great anxiety to do it well, which is often attended with the very contrary effect. There are two or three songs, and particularly one in praise of Brignal Banks, which I trust you will like—because, *entre nous*, I like them myself. One of them is a little dashing banditti song, called and entitled Allen-a-Dale. I think you will be able to judge for yourself in about a week. Pray, how shall I send you the *entire goose*, which will be too heavy to travel the same way with its *giblets*—for the Carlisle coach is terribly inaccurate about parcels? I fear I have made one blunder in mentioning the brooks which flow into the Tees. I have made the Balder distinct from that which comes down Thorsgill—I hope I am not mistaken. You will see the passage; and if they are the same rivulet, the leaf must be cancelled.

"I trust this will find Mrs Morritt pretty well; and I am glad to find she has been better for her little tour. We were delighted with ours, except in respect of its short duration, and Sophia and Walter hold their heads very high among their untravelled companions, from the predominance acquired by their visit to England. You are not perhaps aware of the polish which is supposed to

Digitized by Google

be acquired by the most transitory intercourse with your more refined side of the Tweed. There was an honest carter who once applied to me respecting a plan which he had formed of breeding his son, a great booby of twenty, to the Church. As the best way of evading the scrape, I asked him whether he thought his son's language was quite adapted for the use of a public speaker? to which he answered, with great readiness, that he could knap English with any one, having twice driven his father's cart to Etal coal-hill.

"I have called my heroine Matilda. I don't much like Agnes, though I can't tell why, unless it is because it begins like Agag. Matilda is a name of unmanageable length; but, after all, is better than none, and my poor damsel was likely to go without one in my indecision.

"We are all hungering and thirsting for news from Russia. If Boney's devil does not help him, he is in a poor way. The Leith letters talk of the unanimity of the Russians as being most exemplary; and troops pour in from all quarters of their immense empire. Their commissariat is well managed under the Prince Duke of Oldenburgh. This was their weak point in former wars.

"Adieu! Mrs Scott and the little people send love to Mrs Morritt and you. Ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT."

Digitized by Google

" To the Same.

" Edinburgh, Thursday,
10th December 1812.

" My Dear Morritt,

" I have just time to say that I have received your letters, and am delighted that Rokeby pleases the owner. As I hope the whole will be printed off before Christmas, it will scarce be worth while to send you the other sheets till it reaches you altogether. Your criticisms are the best proof of your kind attention to the poem. I need not say I will pay them every attention in the next edition. But some of the faults are so interwoven with the story, that they must stand. Denzil, for instance, is essential to me, though, as you say, not very interesting; and I assure you that, generally speaking, the *poeta loquitur* has a bad effect in narrative; and when you have twenty things to tell, it is better to be slatternly than tedious. The fact is, that the tediousness of many really good poems arises from an attempt to support the same tone throughout, which often occasions periphrasis, and always stiffness. I am quite sensible that I have often carried the opposite custom too far; but I am apt to impute it partly to not being able to bring out my own ideas well, and partly to haste — not to error in

Digitized by Google

the system. This would, however, lead to a long discussion, more fit for the fireside than for a letter. I need not say that, the poem being in fact your own, you are at perfect liberty to dispose of the sheets as you please. I am glad my geography is pretty correct. It is too late to inquire if Rokeby is insured, for I have burned it down in Canto V.; but I suspect you will bear me no greater grudge than at the noble Russian who burned Moscow. Glorious news to-day from the north — *pereat iste!* Mrs Scott, Sophia, and Walter, join in best compliments to Mrs Morritt; and I am, in great haste, ever faithfully yours, WALTER SCOTT.

"P. S. — I have heard of Lady Hood by a letter from herself. She is well, and in high spirits, and sends me a pretty topaz seal, with a talisman which secures this letter, and signifies (it seems), which one would scarce have expected from its appearance, my name."

We are now close upon the end of this busy twelvemonth; but I must not turn the leaf to 1813, without noticing one of its miscellaneous incidents — his first intercourse by letter with the poet Crabbe. Mr Hatchard, the publisher of his "Tales," forwarded a copy of the book to Scott as soon as it was ready; and, the bookseller having communicated to

Digitized by Google

his author some flattering expressions in Scott's letter of acknowledgment, Mr Crabbe addressed him as follows: —

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.*

"Merston, Grantham, 13th October 1812.

"Sir,

"Mr Hatchard, judging rightly of the satisfaction it would afford me, has been so obliging as to communicate your two letters, in one of which you desire my 'Tales' to be sent; in the other, you acknowledge the receipt of them; and in both you mention my verses in such terms, that it would be affected in me were I to deny, and I think unjust if I were to conceal, the pleasure you give me. I am indeed highly gratified.

"I have long entertained a hearty wish to be made known to a poet whose works are so greatly and so universally admired; and I continued to hope that I might at some time find a common friend, by whose intervention I might obtain that honour; but I am confined by duties near my home, and by sickness in it. It may be long before I be in town, and then no such opportunity might offer. Excuse me, then, sir, if I gladly seize this which now occurs to express my thanks for the politeness of your expres-

Digitized by Google

sions, as well as my desire of being known to a gentleman who had delighted and affected me, and moved all the passions and feelings in turn, I believe—Envy surely excepted—certainly, if I know myself, but in a moderate degree. I truly rejoice in your success; and while I am entertaining in my way, a certain set of readers, for the most part, probably, of peculiar turn and habit, I can with pleasure see the effect you produce on all. Mr Hatchard tells me that he hopes or expects that thousands will read my 'Tales,' and I am convinced that your publisher might, in like manner, so speak of your ten thousands; but this, though it calls to mind the passage, is no true comparison with the related prowess of David and Saul, because I have no evil spirit to arise and trouble me on the occasion; though, if I had, I know no David whose skill is so likely to allay it. Once more, sir, accept my best thanks, with my hearty wishes for your health and happiness, who am, with great esteem, and true respect,

Dear Sir, your obedient servant,

GEORGE CRABBE."

I cannot produce Scott's reply to this communication. Mr Crabbe appears to have, in the course of the year, sent him a copy of all his works, "ex dono auctoris," and there passed between them several letters, one or two of which I must quote.

Digitized by Google

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.*

"Know you, sir, a gentleman in Edinburgh, A. Brunton (the Rev.) who dates St John Street, and who asks my assistance in furnishing hymns which have relation to the Old or New Testament — anything which might suit the purpose of those who are cooking up a book of Scotch Psalmody? Who is Mr Brunton? What is his situation? If I could help one who needed help I would do it cheerfully — but have no great opinion of this undertaking. . . . . .

"With every good wish, yours sincerely,

GEO. CRABBE."

Scott's answer to this letter expresses the opinions he always held in conversation on the important subject to which it refers; and acting upon which, he himself at various times declined taking any part in the business advocated by Dr Brunton:—

"*To the Rev. George Crabbe, Muston, Grantham.*

"My Dear Sir,

"I was favoured with your kind letter some time ago. Of all people in the world, I am least entitled to demand regularity of correspondence; for

Digitized by Google

being, one way and another, doomed to a great deal more writing than suits my indolence, I am sometimes tempted to envy the reverend hermit of Prague, confessor to the niece of Queen Gorboduc, who never saw either pen or ink. Mr Brunton is a very respectable clergyman of Edinburgh, and I believe the work in which he has solicited your assistance is one adopted by the General Assembly, or Convocation of the Kirk. I have no notion that he has any individual interest in it; he is a well-educated and liberal-minded man, and generally esteemed. I have no particular acquaintance with him myself, though we speak together. He is at this very moment sitting on the outside of the bar of our Supreme Court, within which I am fagging as a clerk; but as he is hearing the opinion of the judges upon an action for augmentation of stipend to him and to his brethren, it would not, I conceive, be a very favourable time to canvass a literary topic. But you are quite safe with him; and having so much command of scriptural language, which appears to me essential to the devotional poetry of Christians, I am sure you can assist his purpose much more than any man alive.

"I think those hymns which do not immediately recall the warm and exalted language of the Bible are apt to be, however elegant, rather cold and flat for the purposes of devotion. You will readily believe that I do not approve of the vague and indiscriminate

Digitized by Google

Scripture language which the fanatics of old, and the modern Methodists, have adopted, but merely that solemnity and peculiarity of diction, which at once puts the reader and hearer upon his guard as to the purpose of the poetry. To my Gothic ear, indeed, the *Stabat Mater*, the *Dies Iræ*, and some of the other hymns of the Catholic Church, are more solemn and affecting than the fine classical poetry of Buchanan; the one has the gloomy dignity of a Gothic church, and reminds us instantly of the worship to which it is dedicated; the other is more like a Pagan temple, recalling to our memory the classical and fabulous deities.* This is, probably, all referable to the association of ideas — that is, if the 'association of ideas' continues to be the universal pick-lock of all metaphysical difficulties, as it was when I studied moral philosophy — or to any other more fashionable universal solvent which may have succeeded to it in reputation. Adieu, my dear sir, — I hope you and your family will long enjoy all happiness and prosperity. Never be discouraged from the constant use of your charming talent. The opinions of reviewers are really too contradictory to found anything upon them, whether they are favourable or otherwise; for it is usually their principal object to display the abilities of the writers of the critical lu-

* See Life of Dryden, Scott's Miscellaneous Prose Works, vol. i. p. 293.

Digitized by Google

cubrations themselves. Your 'Tales' are universally admired here. I go but little out, but the few judges whose opinions I have been accustomed to look up to, are unanimous. Ever yours, most truly,

WALTER SCOTT."

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.*

"My Dear Sir,

"Law, then, is your profession — I mean a profession you give your mind and time to — but how 'fag as a *clerk?*' Clerk is a name for a learned person, I know, in our Church; but how the same hand which held the pen of Marmion, holds that with which a clerk fags, unless a clerk means something vastly more than I understand — is not to be comprehended. I wait for elucidation. Know you, dear sir, I have often thought I should love to read *reports* — that is, brief histories of extraordinary cases, with the judgments. If that is what is meant by *reports*, such reading must be pleasant; but, probably, I entertain wrong ideas, and could not understand the books I think so engaging. Yet I conclude there are *histories of cases*, and have often thought of consulting Hatchard whether he knew of such kind of reading, but hitherto I have rested in ignorance. . . . . Yours truly,

GEORGE CRABBE."

Digitized by Google

" To the Rev. George Crabbe.

' My Dear Sir,

" I have too long delayed to thank you for the most kind and acceptable present of your three volumes. Now am I doubly armed, since I have a set for my cabin at Abbotsford as well as in town; and, to say truth, the auxiliary copy arrived in good time, for my original one suffers as much by its general popularity among my young people, as a popular candidate from the hugs and embraces of his democratical admirers. The clearness and accuracy of your painting, whether natural or moral, renders, I have often remarked, your works generally delightful to those whose youth might render them insensible to the other beauties with which they abound. There are a sort of pictures—surely the most valuable, were it but for that reason—which strike the uninitiated as much as they do the connoisseur, though the last alone can render reason for his admiration. Indeed our old friend Horace knew what he was saying when he chose to address his ode, ' *Virginibus puerisque,*' and so did Pope when he told somebody he had the mob on the side of his version of Homer, and did not mind the high-flying critics at Button's. After all, if a faultless poem could be produced, I am satisfied it would tire

Digitized by Google

the critics themselves, and annoy the whole reading world with the spleen.

"You must be delightfully situated in the Vale of Belvoir—a part of England for which I entertain a special kindness, for the sake of the gallant hero, Robin Hood, who, as probably you will readily guess, is no small favourite of mine; his indistinct ideas concerning the doctrine of *meum* and *tuum* being no great objection to an outriding Borderer. I am happy to think that your station is under the protection of the Rutland family, of whom fame speaks highly. Our lord of the 'cairn and the scaur,' waste wilderness and hungry hills, for many a league around, is the Duke of Buccleuch, the head of my clan; a kind and benevolent landlord, a warm and zealous friend, and the husband of a lady—*comme il y en a peu.* They are both great admirers of Mr Crabbe's poetry, and would be happy to know him, should he ever come to Scotland, and venture into the Gothic halls of a Border chief. The early and uniform kindness of this family, with the friendship of the late and present Lord Melville, enabled me, some years ago, to exchange my toils as a barrister, for the lucrative and respectable situation of one of the Clerks of our Supreme Court, which only requires a certain routine of official duty, neither laborious nor calling for any exertion of the mind; so that my time is entirely at my own command.

Digitized by Google

except when I am attending the Court, which seldom occupies more than two hours of the morning during sitting. I besides hold *in commendam* the Sheriffdom of Ettrick Forest, which is now no forest; so that I am a pluralist as to law appointments, and have, as Dogberry says, 'two gowns and every thing handsome about me.'*

"I have often thought it is the most fortunate thing for bards like you and me to have an established profession, and professional character, to render us independent of those worthy gentlemen, the retailers, or, as some have called them, the midwives of literature, who are so much taken up with the abortions they bring into the world, that they are scarcely able to bestow the proper care upon young and flourishing babes like ours. That, however, is only a mercantile way of looking at the matter; but did any of my sons show poetical talent, of which, to my great satisfaction, there are no appearances, the first thing I should do would be to inculcate upon him the duty of cultivating some honourable profession, and qualifying himself to play a more respectable part in society than the mere poet. And as the best corollary of my doctrine, I would make him get your tale of 'The Patron' by heart from beginning to end. It is curious enough that you should have republished the 'Village' for the purpose

* *Much ado about Nothing, Act IV. Scene 2.*

Digitized by Google

of sending your young men to college, and I should have written the Lay of the Last Minstrel for the purpose of buying a new horse for the Volunteer Cavalry. I must now send this scrawl into town to get a frank, for, God knows, it is not worthy of postage. With the warmest wishes for your health, prosperity, and increase of fame—though it needs not—I remain most sincerely and affectionately yours, WALTER SCOTT."*

The contrast of the two poets' epistolary styles is highly amusing; but I have introduced these specimens less on that account, than as marking the cordial confidence which a very little intercourse was sufficient to establish between men so different from each other in most of the habits of life. It will always be considered as one of the most pleasing peculiarities in Scott's history, that he was the friend of every great contemporary poet: Crabbe, as we shall see more largely in the sequel, was no exception to the rule: yet I could hardly name one of them who, manly principles and the cultivation of literature apart, had many points of resemblance to him; and surely not one who had fewer than Crabbe.

* Several of these letters having been enclosed in franked covers, which have perished, I am unable to affix the exact dates to them.

Digitized by Google

Scott continued, this year, his care for the Edinburgh Annual Register — the historical department of which was again supplied by Mr Southey. The poetical miscellany owed its opening piece, the Ballad of Polydore, to the readiness with which Scott entered into correspondence with its author, who sent it to him anonymously, with a letter which, like the verses, might well have excited much interest in his mind, even had it not concluded with stating the writer's age to be *fifteen*. Scott invited the youth to visit him in the country, was greatly pleased with the modesty of his manners and the originality of his conversation, and wrote to Joanna Baillie, that, "though not one of the crimps for the muses," he thought he could hardly be mistaken in believing that in the boyish author of Polydore he had discovered a true genius. When I mention the name of my friend William Howison of Clydegrove, it will be allowed that he prognosticated wisely. He continued to correspond with this young gentleman and his father, and gave both much advice, for which both were most grateful. There was inserted in the same volume a set of beautiful stanzas, inscribed to Scott by Mr Wilson, under the title of the "Magic Mirror," in which that enthusiastic young poet also bears a lofty and lasting testimony to the gentle kindness with which his earlier efforts had been encouraged by him whom he designates, for the first

Digitized by Google

time, by what afterwards became one of his standing titles, that of "The Great Magician."

"Onwards a figure came, with stately brow,
And, as he glanced upon the ruin'd pile
A look of regal pride, 'Say, who art thou
(His countenance bright'ning with a scornful smile,
He sternly cried), 'whose footsteps rash profane
The wild romantic realm where I have willed to reign?'

"But ere to these proud words I could reply,
How changed that scornful face to soft and mild!
A witching frenzy glitter'd in his eye,
Harmless, withal, as that of playful child.
And when once more the gracious vision spoke,
I felt the voice familiar to mine ear;
While many a faded dream of earth awoke,
Connected strangely with that unknown seer,
Who now stretch'd forth his arm, and on the sand
A circle round me traced, as with magician's wand," &c. &c.

Scott's own chief contribution to this volume was a brief account of the Life and Poems (hitherto unpublished)* of Patrick Carey, whom he pronounces to have been not only as stout a cavalier, but almost as good a poet as his contemporary Lovelace. That

* The Rev. Alexander Dyce informs me, that *nine* of Carey's pieces were printed in 1771, for J. Murray of Fleet Street, in a quarto of thirty-five pages, entitled "Poems from a MS. written in the time of Oliver Cromwell." This rare tract had never fallen into Scott's hands. [1839.]

Digitized by Google

Essay was expanded, and prefixed to an edition of Carey's "Trivial Poems and Triolets," which Scott published in 1820; but its circulation in either shape has been limited: and I believe I shall be gratifying the majority of my readers by here transcribing some paragraphs of his beautiful and highly characteristic introduction of this forgotten poet of the 17th century.

"The present age has been so distinguished for research into poetical antiquities, that the discovery of an unknown bard is, in certain chosen literary circles, held as curious as an augmentation of the number of fixed stars would be esteemed by astronomers. It is true, these 'blessed twinklers of the night' are so far removed from us, that they afford no more light than serves barely to evince their existence to the curious investigator; and in like manner the pleasure derived from the revival of an obscure poet is rather in proportion to the rarity of his volume than to its merit; yet this pleasure is not inconsistent with reason and principle. We know by every day's experience the peculiar interest which the lapse of ages confers upon works of human art. The clumsy strength of the ancient castles, which, when raw from the hand of the builder, inferred only the oppressive power of the barons who reared them, is now broken by partial ruin into proper subjects for the poet or the painter; and as Mason has beautifully described the change,

> ———'Time
> Has mouldered into beauty many a tower,
> Which, when it frowned with all its battlements,
> Was only terrible'———

"The monastery, too, which was at first but a fantastic monument of the superstitious devotion of monarchs, or of the purple pride of fattened abbots, has gained by the silent influence of an-

Digitized by Google

tiquity, the power of impressing awe and devotion. Even the stains and weather-taints upon the battlements of such buildings add, like the scars of a veteran, to the affecting impression:

> 'For time has softened what was harsh when new,
> And now the stains are all of sober hue;
> The living stains which nature's hand alone,
> Profuse of life, pours forth upon the stone.'—*Crabbe.*

"If such is the effect of Time in adding interest to the labours of the architect, if partial destruction is compensated by the additional interest of that which remains, can we deny his exerting a similar influence upon those subjects which are sought after by the bibliographer and poetical antiquary? The obscure poet, who is detected by their keen research, may indeed have possessed but a slender portion of that spirit which has buoyed up the works of distinguished contemporaries during the course of centuries, yet still his verses shall, in the lapse of time, acquire an interest, which they did not possess in the eyes of his own generation. The wrath of the critic, like that of the son of Ossian, flies from the foe that is low. Envy, base as she is, has one property of the lion, and cannot prey on carcases; she must drink the blood of a sentient victim, and tear the limbs that are yet warm with vital life. Faction, if the ancient has suffered her persecution, serves only to endear him to the recollection of posterity, whose generous compassion overpays him for the injuries he sustained while in life. And thus freed from the operation of all unfavourable prepossessions, his merit, if he can boast any, has more than fair credit with his readers. This, however, is but part of his advantages. The mere attribute of antiquity is of itself sufficient to interest the fancy, by the lively and powerful train of associations which it awakens. Had the pyramids of Egypt, equally disagreeable in form and senseless as to utility, been the work of any living tyrant, with what feelings, save those of scorn and derision, could we have regarded such a waste of labour? But the sight, nay the very mention of these wonderful monuments, is

Digitized by Google

associated with the dark and sublime ideas which vary their tinge according to the favourite hue of our studies. The Christian divine recollects the land of banishment and of refuge; to the eyes of the historian's fancy, they excite the shades of Pharaohs and of Ptolemies, of Cheops and Merops, and Sesostris drawn in triumph by his sceptred slaves; the philosopher beholds the first rays of moral truth as they dawned on the hieroglyphic sculptures of Thebes and Memphis; and the poet sees the fires of magic blazing upon the mystic altars of a land of incantation. Nor is the grandeur of size essential to such feelings, any more than the properties of grace and utility. Even the rudest remnant of a feudal tower, even the obscure and almost indistinguishable vestige of an altogether unknown edifice, has power to awaken such trains of fancy. We have a fellow interest with the 'son of the winged days,' over whose fallen habitation we tread:

> 'The massy stones, though hewn most roughly, show
> The hand of man had once at least been there.'— *Wordsworth.*

"Similar combinations give a great part of the delight we receive from ancient poetry. In the rude song of the Scald, we regard less the strained imagery and extravagance of epithet, than the wild impressions which it conveys of the dauntless resolution, savage superstition, rude festivity, and ceaseless depredation of the ancient Scandinavians. In the metrical romance, we pardon the long, tedious, and bald enumeration of trifling particulars; the reiterated sameness of the eternal combats between knights and giants; the overpowering languor of the love speeches, and the merciless length and similarity of description — when Fancy whispers to us, that such strains may have cheered the sleepless pillow of the Black Prince on the memorable eves of Cressy or Poictiers. There is a certain romance of Ferumbras, which Robert the Bruce read to his few followers to divert their thoughts from the desperate circumstances in which they were placed, after an unsuccessful attempt to rise against the English. Is there a true

Digitized by Google

Scotsman who, being aware of this anecdote, would be disposed to yawn over the romance of Ferumbras? Or, on the contrary, would not the image of the dauntless hero, inflexible in defeat, beguiling the anxiety of his war-worn attendants by the lays of the minstrel, give to these rude lays themselves an interest beyond Greek and Roman fame?"

The year 1812 had the usual share of minor literary labours — such as contributions to the journals; and before it closed, the Romance of Rokeby was finished. Though it had been long in hand, the MS. sent to the printer bears abundant evidence of its being the *prima cura:* three cantos at least reached Ballantyne through the Melrose post — written on paper of various sorts and sizes — full of blots and interlineations — the closing couplets of a despatch now and then encircling the page, and mutilated by the breaking of the seal.

According to the recollection of Mr Cadell, though James Ballantyne read the poem, as the sheets were advancing through the press, to his usual circle of literary *dilettanti*, their whispers were far from exciting in Edinburgh such an intensity of expectation as had been witnessed in the case of The Lady of the Lake. He adds, however, that it was looked for with undiminished anxiety in the south. "Send me *Rokeby*," Byron writes to Murray on seeing it advertised, — "Who the devil is he? No matter —

Digitized by Google

he has good connexions, and will be well introduced."* Such, I suppose, was the general feeling in London. I well remember, being in those days a young student at Oxford, how the booksellers' shops there were beleaguered for the earliest copies, and how he that had been so fortunate as to secure one, was followed to his chambers by a tribe of friends, all as eager to hear it read as ever horse-jockeys were to see the conclusion of a match at Newmarket; and indeed not a few of those enthusiastic academics had bets depending on the issue of the struggle, which they considered the elder favourite as making, to keep his own ground against the fiery rivalry of Childe Harold.

The poem was published a day or two before Scott returned to Edinburgh from Abbotsford, between which place and Mertoun he had divided his Christmas vacation. On the 9th and 10th of January 1813, he thus addresses his friends at Sunninghill and Hampstead:—

"*To George Ellis, Esq.*

"My Dear Ellis,

"I am sure you will place it to anything rather than want of kindness that I have been so long silent —so very long, indeed, that I am not quite sure

* Byron's Life and Works, vol. ii. p. 169.

Digitized by Google

whether the fault is on my side or yours — but, be it what it may, it can never, I am sure, be laid to forgetfulness in either. This comes to train you on to the merciful reception of a Tale of the Civil Wars; not political, however, but merely a pseudo-romance of pseudo-chivalry. I have converted a lusty buccanier into a hero with some effect; but the worst of all my undertakings is, that my rogue always, in despite of me, turns out my hero. I know not how this should be — I am myself, as Hamlet says, 'indifferent honest;' and my father, though an attorney (as you will call him), was one of the most honest men, as well as gentlemanlike, that ever breathed. I am sure I can bear witness to that — for if he had at all *smacked*, or *grown to*, like the son of Lancelot Gobbo, he might have left us all as rich as Crœsus, besides having the pleasure of taking a fine primrose path himself, instead of squeezing himself through a tight gate and up a steep ascent, and leaving us the decent competence of an honest man's children. As to our more ancient pedigree, I should be loath to vouch for them. My grandfather was a horse-jockey and cattle-dealer, and made a fortune; my great-grandfather a Jacobite and traitor (as the times called him), and lost one; and after him intervened one or two half-starved lairds, who rode a lean horse, and were followed by leaner greyhounds; gathered with difficulty a hundred pounds from a

Digitized by Google

hundred tenants; fought duels; cocked their hats, —and called themselves gentlemen. Then we come to the old Border times, cattle-driving, halters, and so forth, for which, in the matter of honesty, very little I suppose can be said—at least in modern acceptation of the word. Upon the whole, I am inclined to think it is owing to the earlier part of this inauspicious generation that I uniformly find myself in the same scrape in my fables, and that, in spite of the most obstinate determination to the contrary, the greatest rogue in my canvass always stands out as the most conspicuous and prominent figure. All this will be a riddle to you, unless you have received a certain packet, which the Ballantynes were to have sent under Freeling's or Croker's cover, so soon as they could get a copy done up.

"And now let me gratulate you upon the renovated vigour of your fine old friends the Russians. By the Lord, sir! it is most famous this campaign of theirs. I was not one of the very sanguine persons who anticipated the actual capture of Buonaparte — a hope which rather proceeded from the ignorance of those who cannot conceive that military movements, upon a large scale, admit of such a force being accumulated upon any particular point as may, by abandonment of other considerations, always ensure the escape of an individual. But I had no hope, in my time, of seeing the dry bones of the

Digitized by Google

Continent so warm with life again, as this revivification of the Russians proves them to be. I look anxiously for the effect of these great events on Prussia, and even upon Saxony; for I think Boney will hardly trust himself again in Germany, now that he has been plainly shown, both in Spain and Russia, that protracted stubborn unaccommodating resistance will foil those grand exertions in the long-run. All laud be to Lord Wellington, who first taught that great lesson.

"Charlotte is with me just now at this little scrub habitation, where we weary ourselves all day in looking at our projected improvements, and then slumber over the fire, I pretending to read, and she to work trout-nets, or cabbage-nets, or some such article. What is Canning about? Is there any chance of our getting him in? Surely Ministers cannot hope to do without him. Believe me, Dear Ellis, ever truly yours, W. SCOTT.

"Abbotsford, 9th January 1813."

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie.*

"Abbotsford, January 10, 1813.

"Your kind encouragement, my dear friend, has given me spirits to complete the lumbering quarto, which I hope has reached you by this time. I have

Digitized by Google

gone on with my story *forth right*, without troubling myself excessively about the development of the plot and other critical matters—

> 'But shall we go mourn for that, my dear?
> The pale moon shines by night,
> And when we wander here and there,
> We then do go most right.'

I hope you will like Bertram to the end; he is a Caravaggio sketch, which, I may acknowledge to you —but tell it not in Gath— I rather pique myself upon; and he is within the keeping of Nature, though critics will say to the contrary. It may be difficult to fancy that any one should take a sort of pleasure in bringing out such a character, but I suppose it is partly owing to bad reading, and ill-directed reading, when I was young. No sooner had I corrected the last sheet of Rokeby, than I escaped to this Patmos as blythe as bird on tree, and have been ever since most decidedly idle—that is to say, with busy idleness. I have been banking, and securing, and dyking against the river, and planting willows, and aspens, and weeping birches, around my new old well, which I think I told you I had constructed last summer. I have now laid the foundations of a famous back-ground of copse, with pendant trees in front; and I have only to beg a few years to see how my colours will come out of the canvass. Alas! who

Digitized by Google

can promise that? But somebody will take my place —and enjoy them, whether I do or no. My old friend and pastor, Principal Robertson (the historian), when he was not expected to survive many weeks, still watched the setting of the blossom upon some fruit trees in the garden with as much interest as if it was possible he could have seen the fruit come to maturity, and moralized on his own conduct, by observing that we act upon the same inconsistent motive throughout life. It is well we do so for those that are to come after us. I could almost dislike the man who refuses to plant walnut-trees, because they do not bear fruit till the second generation; and so —many thanks to our ancestors, and much joy to our successors, and truce to my fine and very new strain of morality. Yours ever, W. S."

The following letter lets us completely behind the scenes at the publication of Rokeby. The "horrid story" it alludes to was that of a young woman found murdered on New Year's Day in the highway between Greta Bridge and Barnard Castle — a crime, the perpetrator of which was never discovered. The account of a parallel atrocity in Galloway, and the mode of its detection, will show the reader from what source Scott drew one of the most striking incidents in his Guy Mannering: —

Digitized by Google

"*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., Rokeby Park.*

"Edinburgh, 12th January 1813.

"Dear Morritt,

"Yours I have just received in mine office at the Register-House, which will excuse this queer sheet of paper. The publication of Rokeby was delayed till Monday, to give the London publishers a fair start. My copies, that is, my friends', were all to be got off about Friday or Saturday; but yours may have been a little later, as it was to be what they call a picked one. I will call at Ballantyne's as I return from this place, and close the letter with such news as I can get about it there. The book has gone off here very bobbishly; for the impression of 3000 and upwards is within two or three score of being exhausted, and the demand for these continuing faster than they can be boarded. I am heartly glad of this, for now I have nothing to fear but a bankruptcy in the Gazette of Parnassus; but the loss of five or six thousand pounds to my good friends and school-companions would have afflicted me very much. I wish we could whistle you here to-day. Ballantyne always gives a christening dinner, at which the Duke of Buccleuch, and a great many of my friends, are formally feasted. He has always the best singing that can be heard in Edinburgh, and we have usually

Digitized by Google

a very pleasant party, at which your health as patron and proprietor of Rokeby will be faithfully and honourably remembered.

" Your horrid story reminds me of one in Galloway, where the perpetrator of a similar enormity on a poor idiot girl, was discovered by means of the print of his foot which he left upon the clay floor of the cottage in the death-struggle. It pleased Heaven (for nothing short of a miracle could have done it) to enlighten the understanding of an old ram-headed sheriff, who was usually nick-named Leather-head. The steps which he took to discover the murderer were most sagacious. As the poor girl was pregnant (for it was not a case of violation), it was pretty clear that her paramour had done the deed, and equally so that he must be a native of the district. The sheriff caused the minister to advertise from the pulpit that the girl would be buried on a particular day, and that all persons in the neighbourhood were invited to attend the funeral, to show their detestation of such an enormous crime, as well as to evince their own innocence. This was sure to bring the murderer to the funeral. When the people were assembled in the kirk, the doors were locked by the sheriff's order, and the shoes of all the men were examined; that of the murderer was detected by the measure of the foot, tread, &c., and a peculiarity in the mode

Digitized by Google

in which the sole of one of them had been patched. The remainder of the curious chain of evidence upon which he was convicted will suit best with twilight, or a blinking candle, being too long for a letter. The fellow bore a most excellent character, and had committed this crime for no other reason that could be alleged, than that, having been led accidentally into an intrigue with this poor wretch, his pride revolted at the ridicule which was likely to attend the discovery.

"On calling at Ballantyne's, I find, as I had anticipated, that your copy, being of royal size, requires some particular nicety in hot-pressing. It will be sent by the Carlisle mail *quam primum*. Ever yours, WALTER SCOTT.

"P. S.—Love to Mrs Morritt. John Ballantyne says he has just about eighty copies left, out of 3250, this being the second day of publication, and the book a two-guinea one."

It will surprise no one to hear that Mr Morritt assured his friend he considered Rokeby as the best of all his poems. The admirable, perhaps the unique fidelity of the local descriptions, might alone have swayed, for I will not say it perverted, the judgment of the lord of that beautiful and thenceforth classical domain; and, indeed, I must admit that I never

Digitized by Google

understood or appreciated half the charm of this poem until I had become familiar with its scenery. But Scott himself had not designed to rest his strength on these descriptions. He said to James Ballantyne while the work was in progress (September 2), "I hope the thing will do, chiefly because the world will not expect from *me* a poem of which the interest turns upon *character;*" and in another letter (October 28, 1812), "I think you will see the same sort of difference taken in all my former poems,—of which I would say, if it is fair for me to say anything, that the force in the Lay is thrown on style—in Marmion, on description—and in the Lady of the Lake, on incident."* I suspect some of these distinctions may have been matters of afterthought; but as to Rokeby there can be no mistake. His own original conceptions of some of its principal characters have been explained in letters already cited; and I believe no one who compares the poem with his novels will doubt that, had he undertaken their portraiture in prose, they would

* Several letters to Ballantyne on the same subject are quoted in the notes to the last edition of Rokeby. See Scott's Poetical Works, 1834, vol. ix. pp. 1–3; and especially the note on p. 300 from which it appears that the closing stanza was added, in deference to Ballantyne and Erskine, though the author retained his own opinion that "it spoiled one effect without producing another."

Digitized by Google

have come forth with effect hardly inferior to any of all the groupes he ever created As it is, I question whether even in his prose there is anything more exquisitely wrought out, as well as fancied, than the whole contrast of the two rivals for the love of the heroine in Rokeby; and that heroine herself, too, has a very particular interest attached to her. Writing to Miss Edgeworth five years after this time (10th March 1818), he says, "I have not read one of my poems since they were printed, excepting last year the Lady of the Lake, which I liked better than I expected, but not well enough to induce me to go through the rest—so I may truly say with Macbeth—

> 'I am afraid to think of what I've done—
> Look on't again I dare not.'

"This much of *Matilda* I recollect—(for that is not so easily forgotten)—that she was attempted for the existing person of a lady who is now no more, so that I am particularly flattered with your distinguishing it from the others, which are in general mere shadows." I can have no doubt that the lady he here alludes to, was the object of his own unfortunate first love; and as little, that in the romantic generosity, both of the youthful poet who fails to win her higher favour, and of his chivalrous com-

Digitized by Google

petitor, we have before us something more than "a mere shadow."

In spite of these graceful characters, the inimitable scenery on which they are presented, and the splendid vivacity and thrilling interest of several chapters in the story—such as the opening interview of Bertram and Wycliff—the flight up the cliff on the Greta—the first entrance of the cave at Brignall—the firing of Rokeby Castle—and the catastrophe in Eglistone Abbey;—in spite certainly of exquisitely happy lines profusely scattered throughout the whole composition, and of some detached images—that of the setting of the tropical sun,* for example—which were never surpassed by any poet; in spite of all these merits, the immediate success of Rokeby was greatly inferior to that of the Lady of the Lake; nor has it ever since been

* "My noontide, India may declare;
Like her fierce sun, I fired the air!
Like him, to wood and cave bid fly
Her natives, from mine angry eye.
And now, my race of terror run,
Mine be the eve of tropic sun!
No pale gradations quench his ray,
No twilight dews his wrath allay;
With disk like battle-target red,
He rushes to his burning bed.
Dyes the wide wave with bloody light,
Then sinks at once—and all is night."—*Canto* vi. 21.

Digitized by Google

so much a favourite with the public at large as any other of his poetical romances. He ascribes this failure, in his introduction of 1830, partly to the radically unpoetical character of the Round-heads; but surely their character has its poetical side also, had his prejudices allowed him to enter upon its study with impartial sympathy; and I doubt not, Mr Morritt suggested the difficulty on this score, when the outline of the story was as yet undetermined, from consideration rather of the poet's peculiar feelings, and powers as hitherto exhibited, than of the subject absolutely. Partly he blames the satiety of the public ear, which had had so much of his rhythm, not only from himself, but from dozens of mocking birds, male and female, all more or less applauded in their day, and now all equally forgotten.* This circumstance, too, had probably no slender effect; the more that, in defiance of all the hints of his friends, he now, in his narrative, repeated (with more negligence) the uniform octo-

* "Scott found peculiar favour and imitation among the fair sex. There was Miss Holford, and Miss Mitford, and Miss Francis; but, with the greatest respect be it spoken, none of his imitators did much honour to the original except Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, until the appearance of 'The Bridal of Triermain' and 'Harold the Dauntless,' which, in the opinion of some, equalled if not surpassed him; and, lo! after three or four years they turned out to be the master's own compositions."—Byron, vol. xv. p. 96.

Digitized by Google

syllabic couplets of the Lady of the Lake, instead of recurring to the more varied cadence of the Lay or Marmion. It is fair to add that, among the London circles at least, some sarcastic flings in Mr Moore's "Twopenny Post Bag" must have had an unfavourable influence on this occasion.* But the cause of failure which the poet himself places last, was unquestionably the main one. The deeper and darker passion of Childe Harold, the audacity of its morbid voluptuousness, and the melancholy majesty of the numbers in which it defied the world, had taken the general imagination by storm; and Rokeby, with many beauties and some sublimities, was pitched, as a whole, on a key which seemed tame in the comparison.

I have already adverted to the fact that Scott felt it a relief, not a fatigue, to compose the Bridal of Triermain *pari passu* with Rokeby. In answer, for

* See, for instance, the Epistle of Lady Corke — or that of Messrs Lackington, booksellers, to one of their dandy authors —

"Should you feel any touch of *poetical* glow,
We've a scheme to suggest—Mr Scott, you must know
(Who, we're sorry to say it, now works for the *Row*),
Having quitted the Borders to seek new renown,
Is coming by long Quarto stages to town,
And beginning with Rokeby (the job's sure to pay),
Means to do all the gentlemen's seats on the way.
Now the scheme is, though none of our hackneys can beat him,
To start a new Poet through Highgate to meet him;
Who by means of quick proofs—no revises—long coaches—
May do a few Villas before Scott approaches;
Indeed if our Pegasus be not curst shabby,
He'll reach without foundering, at least Woburn-Abbey." &c. &c

Digitized by Google

example, to one of James Ballantyne's letters, urging accelerated speed with the weightier romance, he says, "I fully share in your anxiety to get forward the grand work; but, I assure you, I feel the more confidence from coquetting with the guerilla."

The quarto of Rokeby was followed, within two months, by the small volume which had been designed for a twin-birth; — the MS. had been transcribed by one of the Ballantynes themselves, in order to guard against any indiscretion of the press-people; and the mystification, aided and abetted by Erskine, in no small degree heightened the interest of its reception. Except Mr Morritt, Scott had, so far as I am aware, no English confidant upon this occasion. Whether any of his daily companions in the Parliament House were in the secret, I have never heard; but I can scarcely believe that any of those intimate friends, who had known him and Erskine from their youth upwards, could have for a moment believed the latter capable either of the invention or the execution of this airy and fascinating romance in little. Mr Jeffrey, for whom chiefly "the trap had been set," was far too sagacious to be caught in it; but, as it happened, he made a voyage that year to America, and thus lost the opportunity of immediately expressing his opinion either of Rokeby or of the Bridal of Triermain. The writer in the Quarterly Review (July 1813) seems to have been

Digitized by Google

completely deceived — "We have already spoken of it," says the critic, "as an imitation of Mr Scott's style of composition; and if we are compelled to make the general approbation more precise and specific, we should say, that if it be inferior in vigour to some of his productions, it equals or surpasses them in elegance and beauty; that it is more uniformly tender, and far less infected with the unnatural prodigies and coarseness of the earlier romances In estimating its merits, however, we should forget that it is offered as an imitation. The diction undoubtedly reminds us of a rhythm and cadence we have heard before; but the sentiments, descriptions, and characters, have qualities that are native and unborrowed."

If this writer was, as I suppose, Ellis, he probably considered it as a thing impossible that Scott should have engaged in such a scheme without giving him a hint of it; but to have admitted into the secret any one who was likely to criticise the piece, would have been to sacrifice the very object of the device. Erskine's own suggestion, that "perhaps a quizzical review might be got up," led, I believe, to nothing more important than a paragraph in one of the Edinburgh newspapers. He may be pardoned for having been not a little flattered to find it generally considered as not impossible that he should have written such a poem; and I have heard James

Digitized by Google

Ballantyne say, that nothing could be more amusing than the style of his coquetting on the subject while it was yet fresh; but when this first excitement was over, his natural feeling of what was due to himself, as well as to his friend, dictated many a remonstrance; and, though he ultimately acquiesced in permitting another minor romance to be put forth in the same manner, he did so reluctantly, and was far from acting his part so well.

Scott says, in the Introduction to the Lord of the Isles, "As Mr Erskine was more than suspected of a taste for poetry, and as I took care, in several places, to mix something that might resemble (as far as was in my power) my friend's feeling and manner, the train easily caught, and two large editions were sold." Among the passages to which he here alludes, are no doubt those in which the character of the minstrel Arthur is shaded with the colourings of an almost effeminate gentleness. Yet, in the midst of them, the "mighty minstrel" himself, from time to time, escapes; as, for instance, where the lover bids Lucy, in that exquisite picture of crossing a mountain stream, trust to his "stalwart arm"—

> "Which could yon oak's prone trunk uprear."

Nor can I pass the compliment to Scott's own fair patroness, where Lucy's admirer is made to con-

Digitized by Google

fess, with some momentary lapse of gallantry, that he

> "Ne'er won—best meed to minstrel true—
> One favouring smile from fair Buccleuch;"

nor the burst of genuine Borderism,—

> "Bewcastle now must keep the hold,
> Speir-Adam's steeds must bide in stall;
> Of Hartley-burn the bowmen bold
> Must only shoot from battled wall;
> And Liddesdale may buckle spur,
> And Teviot now may belt the brand,
> Tarras and Ewes keep nightly stir,
> And Eskdale foray Cumberland."—

But, above all, the choice of the scenery, both of the Introductions and of the story itself, reveals the early and treasured predilections of the poet. For who that remembers the circumstances of his first visit to the vale of St John, but must see throughout the impress of his own real romance? I own I am not without a suspicion that, in one passage, which always seemed to me a blot upon the composition—that in which Arthur derides the military coxcombries of his rival—

> "Who comes in foreign trashery
> Of tinkling chain and spur,
> A walking haberdashery
> Of feathers, lace, and fur;

Digitized by Google

In Rowley's antiquated phrase,
Horse-milliner of modern days"—

there is a sly reference to the incidents of a certain ball, of August 1797, at the Gilsland Spa.*

Among the more prominent Erskinisms, are the eulogistic mention of Glasgow, the scene of Erskine's education; and the lines on Collins — a supplement to whose Ode on the Highland Superstitions is, as far as I know, the only specimen that ever was published of Erskine's verse.†

As a whole, the Bridal of Triermain appears to me as characteristic of Scott as any of his larger poems. His genius pervades and animates it beneath a thin and playful veil, which perhaps adds as much of grace as it takes away of splendour. As Wordsworth says of the eclipse on the lake of Lugano—

"'Tis sunlight sheathed and gently charmed;"

and I think there is at once a lightness and a polish of versification beyond what he has elsewhere attained. If it be a miniature, it is such a one as a Cooper might have hung fearlessly beside the masterpieces of Vandyke.

* See *ante*, vol. i. p. 366.

† It is included in the Border Minstrelsy. Scott's Poetical Works, vol. i. p. 270.

Digitized by Google

The Introductions contain some of the most exquisite passages he ever produced; but their general effect has always struck me as unfortunate. No art can reconcile us to contemptuous satire of the merest frivolities of modern life — some of them already, in twenty years, grown obsolete — interlaid between such bright visions of the old world of romance, when

> "Strength was gigantic, valour high,
> And wisdom soared beyond the sky,
> And beauty had such matchless beam
> As lights not now a lover's dream."

The fall is grievous, from the hoary minstrel of Newark, and his feverish tears on Killiecrankie, to a pathetic swain, who can stoop to denounce as objects of his jealousy—

> "The landaulet and four blood bays—
> The Hessian boot and pantaloon."

Before Triermain came out, Scott had taken wing for Abbotsford; and indeed he seems to have so contrived it in his earlier period, that he should not be in Edinburgh when any unavowed work of his was published; whereas, from the first, in the case of books that bore his name on the title-page, he walked as usual to the Parliament House, and bore all the buzz and tattle of friends and acquaintance with an air of good-humoured equanimity, or rather total

Digitized by Google

apparent indifference. The following letter, which contains some curious matter of more kinds than one, was written partly in town and partly in the country:—

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie, Hampstead.*

"Edinburgh, March 13th, 1813.

"My Dearest Friend,

"The pinasters have arrived safe, and I can hardly regret, while I am so much flattered by, the trouble you have had in collecting them. I have got some wild larch trees from Loch Katrine, and both are to be planted next week, when, God willing, I shall be at Abbotsford to superintend the operation. I have got a little corner of ground laid out for a nursery, where I shall rear them carefully till they are old enough to be set forth to push their fortune on the banks of Tweed.—What I shall finally make of this villa-work I don't know, but in the meantime it is very entertaining. I shall have to resist very flattering invitations this season; for I have received hints, from more quarters than one, that my bow would be acceptable at Carlton House in case I should be in London, which is very flattering, especially as there were some prejudices to be got over in that quarter. I should be in some danger

Digitized by Google

of giving new offence, too; for, although I utterly disapprove of the present rash and ill-advised course of the princess, yet, as she always was most kind and civil to me, I certainly could not, as a gentleman, decline obeying any commands she might give me to wait upon her, especially in her present adversity. So, though I do not affect to say I should be sorry to take an opportunity of peeping at the splendours of royalty, prudence and economy will keep me quietly at home till another day. My great amusement here this some time past has been going almost nightly to see John Kemble, who certainly is a great artist. It is a pity he shows too much of his machinery. I wish he could be double-capped, as they say of watches; — but the fault of too much study certainly does not belong to many of his tribe. He is, I think, very great in those parts especially where character is tinged by some acquired and systematic habits, like those of the Stoic philosophy in Cato and Brutus, or of misanthropy in Penruddock: but sudden turns and natural bursts of passion are not his forte. I saw him play Sir Giles Overreach (the Richard III. of middling life) last night; but he came not within a hundred miles of Cooke, whose terrible visage, and short, abrupt, and savage utterance, gave a reality almost to that extraordinary scene in which he boasts of his own successful villany to a nobleman of worth and honour, of whose

Digitized by Google

alliance he is ambitious. Cooke contrived somehow to impress upon the audience the idea of such a monster of enormity as had learned to pique himself even upon his own atrocious character. But Kemble was too handsome, too plausible, and too smooth, to admit its being probable that he should be blind to the unfavourable impression which these extraordinary vaunts are likely to make on the person whom he is so anxious to conciliate.

"Abbotsford, 21st March.

"This letter, begun in Edinburgh, is to take wing from Abbotsford. John Winnos (now John Winnos is the sub-oracle of Abbotsford, the principal being Tom Purdie)—John Winnos pronounces that the pinaster seed ought to be raised at first on a hot-bed, and thence transplanted to a nursery: so to a hot-bed they have been carefully consigned, the upper oracle not objecting, in respect his talent lies in catching a salmon, or finding a hare sitting—on which occasions (being a very complete Scrub) he solemnly exchanges his working jacket for an old green one of mine, and takes the air of one of Robin Hood's followers. His more serious employments are ploughing, harrowing, and overseeing all my premises; being a complete jack-of-all-trades, from the carpenter to the shepherd, nothing comes strange to him; and being extremely honest, and somewhat

Digitized by Google

of a humourist, he is quite my right hand. I cannot help singing his praises at this moment, because I have so many odd and out-of-the-way things to do, that I believe the conscience of many of our jog-trot countrymen would revolt at being made my instrument in sacrificing good corn-land to the visions of Mr Price's theory. Mr Pinkerton, the historian, has a play coming out at Edinburgh; it is by no means bad poetry, yet I think it will not be popular; the people come and go, and speak very notable things in good blank verse, but there is no very strong interest excited: the plot also is disagreeable, and liable to the objections (though in a less degree) which have been urged against the Mysterious Mother: it is to be acted on Wednesday; I will let you know its fate. P., with whom I am in good habits, showed the MS., but I referred him, with such praise as I could conscientiously bestow, to the players and the public. I don't know why one should take the task of damning a man's play out of the hands of the proper tribunal. Adieu, my dear friend. I have scarce room for love to Miss, Mrs, and Dr B. W. SCOTT."

To this I add a letter to Lady Louisa Stuart, who had sent him a copy of these lines, found by Lady Douglas on the back of a tattered bank-note—

Digitized by Google

"Farewell, my note, and wheresoe'er ye wend,
Shun gaudy scenes, and be the poor man's friend.
You've left a poor one; go to one as poor,
And drive despair and hunger from his door."

It appears that these noble friends had adopted, or feigned to adopt, the belief that the Bridal of Triermain was a production of Mr R. P. Gillies—who had about this time published an imitation of Lord Byron's *Romaunt*, under the title of "Childe Alarique."

"*To the Lady Louisa Stuart, Bothwell Castle.*

"Abbotsford, 28th April 1813.

"Dear Lady Louisa,

"Nothing can give me more pleasure than to hear from you, because it is both a most acceptable favour to me, and also a sign that your own spirits are recovering their tone. Ladies are, I think, very fortunate in having a resource in work at a time when the mind rejects intellectual amusement. Men have no resource but striding up and down the room, like a bird that beats itself to pieces against the bars of its cage; whereas needle-work is a sort of sedative, too mechanical to worry the mind by distracting it from the points on which its musings turn, yet gradually assisting it in regaining steadiness and

Digitized by Google

composure; for so curiously are our bodies and minds linked together, that the regular and constant employment of the former on any process, however dull and uniform, has the effect of tranquillizing, where it cannot disarm, the feelings of the other. I am very much pleased with the lines on the guinea note, and if Lady Douglas does not object, I would willingly mention the circumstance in the Edinburgh Annual Register. I think it will give the author great delight to know that his lines had attracted attention, and *had* sent the paper on which they were recorded, 'heaven-directed, to the poor.' Of course I would mention no names. There was, as your Ladyship may remember, some years since, a most audacious and determined murder committed on a porter belonging to the British Linen Company's Bank at Leith, who was stabbed to the heart in broad daylight, and robbed of a large sum in notes.* If ever this crime comes to light, it will be through the circumstance of an idle young fellow having written part of a playhouse song on one of the notes, which, however, has as yet never appeared in circulation.

"I am very glad you like Rokeby, which is nearly out of fashion and memory with me. It has been

* This murder, perpetrated in November 1806, remains a mystery in 1836. The porter's name was Begbie.

Digitized by Google

wonderfully popular, about ten thousand copies having walked off already, in about three months, and the demand continuing faster than it can be supplied. As to my imitator, the Knight of Triermain, I will endeavour to convey to Mr Gillies *(puisque Gillies il est)* your Ladyship's very just strictures on the Introduction to the second Canto. But if he takes the opinion of a hacked old author like myself, he will content himself with avoiding such bevues in future, without attempting to mend those which are already made. There is an ominous old proverb which says, *confess and be hanged;* and truly if an author acknowledges his own blunders, I do not know who he can expect to stand by him; whereas, let him confess nothing, and he will always find some injudicious admirers to vindicate even his faults. So that I think after publication the effect of criticism should be prospective, in which point of view I dare say Mr G. will take your friendly hint, especially as it is confirmed by that of the best judges who have read the poem.—Here is beautiful weather for April! an absolute snow-storm mortifying me to the core by retarding the growth of all my young trees and shrubs.—Charlotte begs to be most respectfully remembered to your Ladyship and Lady D. We are realizing the nursery tale of the man and his wife who lived in a vinegar bottle, for our only sitting room is just twelve feet square, and my Eve alleges

Digitized by Google

that I am too big for our paradise. To make amends, I have created a tolerable garden, occupying about an English acre, which I begin to be very fond of. When one passes forty, an addition to the quiet occupations of life becomes of real value, for I do not hunt and fish with quite the relish I did ten years ago. Adieu, my dear Lady Louisa, and all good attend you.

WALTER SCOTT."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVI.

Affairs of John Ballantyne and Co.—Causes of their derangement — Letters of Scott to his Partners—Negotiation for relief with Messrs Constable—New purchase of Land at Abbotsford — Embarrassments continued—John Ballantyne's Expresses — Drumlanrig — Penrith, &c. — Scott's meeting with the Marquis of Abercorn at Longtown — His application to the Duke of Buccleuch — Offer of the Poet-Laureateship — considered — and declined — Address of the City of Edinburgh to the Prince-Regent — its reception — Civic Honours conferred on Scott — Question of Taxation on Literary Income — Letters to Mr Morritt — Mr Southey — Mr Richardson — Mr Crabbe —Miss Baillie and Lord Byron.

1813.

About a month after the publication of the Bridal of Triermain, the affairs of the Messrs Ballantyne,

Digitized by Google

which had never apparently been in good order since the establishment of the bookselling firm, became so embarrassed as to call for Scott's most anxious efforts to disentangle them. Indeed, it is clear that there had existed some very serious perplexity in the course of the preceding autumn; for Scott writes to John Ballantyne, while Rokeby was in progress (August 11, 1812)—"I have a letter from James, very anxious about your health and state of spirits. If you suffer the present inconveniences to depress you too much, you are wrong; and if you conceal any part of them, are very unjust to us all. I am always ready to make any sacrifices to do justice to engagements, and would rather sell any thing, or every thing, than be less than true men to the world."

I have already, perhaps, said enough to account for the general want of success in this publishing adventure; but Mr James Ballantyne sums up the case so briefly in his death-bed paper, that I may here quote his words. "My brother," he says, "though an active and pushing, was not a cautious bookseller, and the large sums received never formed an addition to stock. In fact, they were all expended by the partners, who, being then young and sanguine men, not unwillingly adopted my brother's hasty results. By May 1813, in a word, the absolute throwing away of our own most valuable publica-

Digitized by Google

tions, and the rash adoption of some injudicious speculations of Mr Scott, had introduced such losses and embarrassments, that after a very careful consideration, Mr Scott determined to dissolve the concern." He adds,—"This became a matter of less difficulty, because time had in a great measure worn away the differences between Mr Scott and Mr Constable, and Mr Hunter was now out of Constable's concern.* A peace, therefore, was speedily made up, and the old habits of intercourse were restored."

How reluctantly Scott had made up his mind to open such a negotiation with Constable, as involved a complete exposure of the mismanagement of John Ballantyne's business as a publisher, will appear from a letter dated about the Christmas of 1812, in which he says to James, who had proposed asking Constable to take a share both in Rokeby and in the Annual Register, "You must be aware, that in stating the objections which occur to me to taking in Constable, I think they ought to give way either to absolute necessity or to very strong grounds of advantage. But I *am* persuaded nothing ultimately good can be expected from any connexion with that house, unless for those who have a mind to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. We will talk the matter coolly over, and in the mean while, perhaps you could see

* Mr. Hunter died in March 1812.

Digitized by Google

W. Erskine, and learn what impression this odd union is like to make among your friends. Erskine is sound-headed, and quite to be trusted with *your whole story*. I must own I can hardly think the purchase of the Register is equal to the loss of credit and character which your surrender will be conceived to infer." At the time when he wrote this, Scott no doubt anticipated that Rokeby would have success not less decisive than the Lady of the Lake; but in this expectation—though 10,000 copies in three months would have seemed to any other author a triumphant sale—he had been disappointed. And mean while the difficulties of the firm accumulating from week to week, had reached by the middle of May, a point which rendered it absolutely necessary for him to conquer all his scruples.

Mr Cadell, then Constable's partner, says in his *Memoranda*, — "Prior to this time the reputation of John Baliantyne and Co. had been decidedly on the decline. It was notorious in the trade that their general speculations had been unsuccessful; they were known to be grievously in want of money. These rumours were realized to the full by an application which Messrs. B. made to Mr Constable in May 1813, for pecuniary aid, accompanied by an offer of some of the books they had published since 1809, as a purchase, along with various shares in Mr Scott's own poems. Their difficulties were admitted, and the ne-

Digitized by Google

gotiation was pressed urgently; so much so, that a pledge was given, that if the terms asked were acceded to, John Ballantyne and Co. would endeavour to wind up their concerns, and cease as soon as possible to be publishers." Mr Cadell adds:—"I need hardly remind you that this was a period of very great general difficulty in the money market. It was the crisis of the war. The public expenditure had reached an enormous height; and even the most prosperous mercantile houses were often pinched to sustain their credit. It may easily, therefore, be supposed that the Messrs Ballantyne had during many months besieged every banker's door in Edinburgh, and that their agents had done the like in London."

The most important of the requests which the labouring house made to Constable was, that he should forthwith take entirely to himself the stock, copyright, and future management of the Edinburgh Annual Register. Upon examining the state of this book, however, Constable found that the loss on it had never been less than £1000 per annum, and he therefore declined that matter for the present. He promised, however, to consider seriously the means he might have of ultimately relieving them from the pressure of the Register, and, in the mean time, offered to take 300 sets of the stock on hand. The other purchases he finally made on the 18th of May, were considerable portions of Weber's unhappy Beau-

Digitized by Google

mont and Fletcher—of an edition of De Foe's novels in twelve volumes—of a collection entitled Tales of the East in three large volumes, 8vo, double columned—and of another in one volume, called Popular Tales — about 800 copies of the Vision of Don Roderick—and a fourth of the remaining copyright of Rokeby, price £700. The immediate accommodation thus received amounted to £2000; and Scott, who had personally conducted the latter part of the negotiation, writes thus to his junior partner, who had gone a week or two earlier to London in quest of some similar assistance there: —

"*To Mr John Ballantyne, care of Messrs Longman & Co., London.*

"Printing-Office, May 18th, 1813.

"Dear John,

"After many *offs* and *ons*, and as many *projets* and *contre-projets* as the treaty of Amiens, I have at length concluded a treaty with Constable, in which I am sensible he has gained a great advantage;* but what could I do amidst the disorder and pressure of

* "These and after purchases of books from the stock of J. Ballantyne and Co. were resold to the trade by Constable's firm, at less than one half and one third of the prices at which they were thus obtained."—*Note from Mr R. Cadell.*

Digitized by Google

so many demands? The arrival of your long-dated bills decided my giving in, for what could James or I do with them? I trust this sacrifice has cleared our way, but many rubs remain; nor am I, after these hard skirimishes, so able to meet them by my proper credit. Constable, however, will be a zealous ally; and for the first time these many weeks I shall lay my head on a quiet pillow, for now I do think that, by our joint exertions, we shall get well through the storm, save Beaumont from depreciation, get a partner in our heavy concerns, reef our topsails, and move on securely under an easy sail. And if, on the one hand, I have sold my gold too cheap, I have, on the other, turned my lead to gold. Brewster* and Singers† are the only heavy things to which I have not given a blue eye. Had your news of Cadell's sale‡ reached us here, I could not have harpooned my grampus so deeply as I have done, as nothing but Rokeby would have barbed the hook.

"Adieu, my dear John. I have the most sincere regard for you, and you may depend on my considering your interest with quite as much attention as my own. If I have ever expressed myself with irritation

* Dr Brewster's edition of Ferguson's Astronomy, 2 vols. 8vo. with plates, 4to, Edin. 1811. 36s.

† Dr Singers' General View of the County of Dumfries, 8vo. Edin. 1812. 18s.

‡ A trade sale of Messrs Cadell and Davies in the Strand.

Digitized by Google

in speaking of this business, you must impute it to the sudden, extensive, and unexpected embarrassments in which I found myself involved all at once. If to your real goodness of heart and integrity, and to the quickness and acuteness of your talents, you added habits of more universal circumspection, and, above all, the courage to tell disagreeable truths to those whom you hold in regard, I pronounce that the world never held such a man of business. These it must be your study to add to your other good qualities. Mean time, as some one says to Swift, I love you with all your failings. Pray make an effort and love me with all mine. Yours truly, W. S."

Three days afterwards, Scott resumes the subject as follows:—

"*To Mr John Ballantyne, London.*

"Edinburgh, 21st May 1813.

"Dear John,

"Let it never escape your recollection, that shutting your own eyes, or blinding those of your friends, upon the actual state of business, is the high road to ruin. Meanwhile, we have recovered our legs for a week or two. Constable will, I think, come in to the Register. He is most anxious to maintain the printing-office; he sees most truly that

Digitized by Google

the more we print the less we publish; and for the same reason he will, I think, help us off with our heavy quire-stock.

"I was aware of the distinction between the *state* and the *calendar* as to the latter including the printing-office bills, and I summed and docked them (they are marked with red ink), but there is still a difference of £2000 and upwards on the calendar against the business. I sometimes fear that, between the long dates of your bills, and the tardy settlements of the Edinburgh trade, some difficulties will occur even in June; and July I always regard with deep anxiety. As for loss, if I get out without public exposure, I shall not greatly regard the rest. Radcliffe the physician said, when he lost £2000 on the South-Sea scheme, it was only going up 2000 pair of stairs; I say, it is only writing 2000 couplets, and the account is balanced. More of this hereafter. Yours truly, W. SCOTT.

"P. S. — James has behaved very well during this whole transaction, and has been most steadily attentive to business. I am convinced that the more he works the better his health will be. One or other of you will need to be constantly in the printing-office henceforward — it is the sheet-anchor."

The allusion in this *postscript* to James Ballan-

Digitized by Google

tyne's health reminds me that Scott's letters to himself are full of hints on that subject, even from a very early period of their connexion; and these hints are all to the same effect. James was a man of lazy habits, and not a little addicted to the more solid, and perhaps more dangerous, part of the indulgencies of the table. One letter (dated Ashestiel, 1810) will be a sufficient specimen:—

"*To Mr James Ballantyne.*

"My Dear James,

"I am very sorry for the state of your health, and should be still more so, were I not certain that I can prescribe for you as well as any physician in Edinburgh. You have naturally an athletic constitution and a hearty stomach, and these agree very ill with a sedentary life and the habits of indolence which it brings on. Your stomach thus gets weak; and from those complaints of all others arise most certainly flatulence, hypochondria, and all the train of unpleasant feelings connected with indigestion. We all know the horrible sensation of the nightmare arises from the same cause which gives those waking nightmares commonly called the blue devils. You must positively put yourself on a regimen as to eating, not for a month or two, but for a year at least, and take regular exercise — and my life for yours.

Digitized by Google

I know this by myself, for if I were to eat and drink in town as I do here, it would soon finish me, and yet I am sensible I live too genially in Edinburgh as it is. Yours very truly, W. SCOTT."

Among Scott's early pets at Abbotsford there was a huge raven, whose powers of speech were remarkable, far beyond any parrot's that he had ever met with; and who died in consequence of an excess of the kind to which James Ballantyne was addicted. Thenceforth, Scott often repeated to his old friend, and occasionally scribbled by way of postscript to his notes on business—

"When you are craving,
Remember the Raven."

Sometimes the formula is varied to—

"When you've dined half,
Think on poor Ralph!"

His preachments of regularity in book-keeping to John, and of abstinence from good cheer to James Ballantyne, were eqnally vain; but on the other hand it must be allowed that they had some reason for displeasure—(the more felt because they durst not, like him, express their feelings)*—when they found

* Since this work was first published, I have been compelled to examine very minutely the details of Scott's connexion with the Ballantynes, and one result is, that both James and John had

Digitized by Google

that scarcely had these "hard skirmishes" terminated in the bargain of May 18th, before Scott was preparing fresh embarrassments for himself, by commencing a negotiation for a considerable addition to his property at Abbotsford. As early as the 20th of June he writes to Constable as being already aware of this matter, and alleges his anxiety "to close at once with a very capricious person," as the only reason that could have induced him to make up his mind to sell the whole copyright of an as yet unwritten poem, to be entitled "The Nameless Glen." This copyright he then offered to dispose of to Constable for £5000; adding, "this is considerably less in proportion than I have already made on the share of Rokeby sold to yourself, and surely that is no unfair admeasurement." A long correspondence ensued, in the course of which Scott mentions "the Lord of the Isles," as a title which had suggested itself to him in place of "the Nameless Glen;" but as the negotiation did not succeed, I may pass its details. The new property which Scott was so eager

---

trespassed so largely, for their private purposes, on the funds of the Companies, that, Scott being, as their letters distinctly state, the only "monied partner," and his over-advances of capital having been very extensive, any inquiry on their part as to his uncommercial expenditure must have been entirely out of the question. To avoid misrepresentation, however, I leave my text as it was. — [1839.]

Digitized by Google

to acquire, was that hilly tract stretching from the old Roman road near Turn-again towards the Cauldshiels Loch: a then desolate and naked mountain-mere, which he likens, in a letter of this summer (to Lady Louisa Stuart), to the Lake of the Genie and the Fisherman in the Arabian Tale. To obtain this lake at one extremity of his estate, as a contrast to the Tweed at the other, was a prospect for which hardly any sacrifice would have appeared too much; and he contrived to gratify his wishes in the course of that July, to which he had spoken of himself in May as looking forward " with the deepest anxiety."

Nor was he, I must add, more able to control some of his minor tastes. I find him writing to Mr Terry, on the 20th of June, about " that splendid lot of ancient armour, advertised by Winstanley," a celebrated auctioneer in London, of which he had the strongest fancy to make his spoil, though he was at a loss to know where it should be placed when it reached Abbotsford; and on the 2d of July, this acquisition also having been settled, he says to the same correspondent — " I have written to Mr Winstanley. My bargain with Constable was otherwise arranged, but Little John is to find the needful article, and I shall take care of Mr Winstanley's interest, who has behaved too handsomely in this matter to be trusted to the mercy of our little friend

Digitized by Google

the Picaroon, who is, notwithstanding his many excellent qualities, a little on the score of old Gobbo—doth somewhat smack — somewhat grow to.* We shall be at Abbotsford on the 12th, and hope soon to see you there. I am fitting up a small room above *Peter-house*, where an unceremonious bachelor may consent to do penance, though the place is a cock-loft, and the access that which leads many a bold fellow to his last nap — a ladder."† And a few weeks later, he says, in the same sort, to his sister-in-law, Mrs Thomas Scott — "In despite of these hard times, which affect my patrons the booksellers very much, I am buying old books and old armour as usual, and adding to what your old friend‡ Burns calls—

"A fouth of auld nick-nackets,
Rusty airn caps and jingling jackets,
Wad haud the Lothians three in tackets
A towmont gude,
And parritch-pats and auld saut-backets,
Before the flude.'"

* *Merchant of Venice, Act II. Scene* 2.

† The court of offices, built on the *haugh* at Abbotsford in 1812, included a house for the faithful coachman, Peter Mathieson. One of Scott's Cantabrigian friends, Mr W. S. Rose, gave the whole pile soon afterwards the name, which it retained to the end, of *Peter-House*. The loft at Peter-House continued to be occupied by occasional bachelor guests until the existing mansion was completed.

‡ Mrs Thomas Scott had met Burns frequently in early life at

Digitized by Google

Notwithstanding all this, it must have been with a most uneasy mind that he left Edinburgh to establish himself at Abbotsford that July. The assistance of Constable had not been granted, indeed it had not been asked, to an extent at all adequate for the difficulties of the case; and I have now to transcribe, with pain and reluctance, some extracts from Scott's letters, during the ensuing autumn, which speak the language of anxious, and indeed humiliating distress; and give a most lively notion of the incurable recklessness of his younger partner.

"*To Mr John Ballantyne.*

"Abbotsford, Saturday, 24th July.

"Dear John,

"I sent you the order, and have only to hope it arrived safe and in good time. I waked the boy at three o'clock myself, having slept little, less on account of the money than of the time. Surely you should have written, three or four days before, the probable amount of the deficit, and, as on former occasions, I would have furnished you with means of meeting it. These expresses, besides every other inconvenience, excite surprise in my family and in

Dumfries. Her brother, the late Mr David MacCulloch, was a great favourite with the poet, and the best singer of his songs that I ever heard.

Digitized by Google

the neighbourhood. I know no justifiable occasion for them but the unexpected return of a bill. I do not consider you as answerable for the success of plans, but I do and must hold you responsible for giving me, in distinct and plain terms, your opinion as to any difficulties which may occur, and that in such time that I may make arrangements to obviate them if possible.

"Of course if anything has gone wrong you will come out here to-morrow. But if, as I hope and trust, the cash arrived safe, you will write to me, under cover to the Duke of Buccleuch, Drumlanrig Castle, Dumfries-shire. I shall set out for that place on Monday morning early. W. S."

"*To Mr James Ballantyne.*

"Abbotsford, 25th July 1813.

"Dear James,

"I address the following jobation for John to you, that you may see whether I do not well to be angry, and enforce upon him the necessity of constantly writing his fears as well as his hopes. You should rub him often on this point, for his recollection becomes rusty the instant I leave town and am not in the way to rack him with constant questions. I hope the presses are doing well, and that you are quite stout again. Yours truly, W. S."

Digitized by Google

(ENCLOSURE.)

" *To Mr John Ballantyne.*

" My good friend John,

" The post brings me no letter from you, which I am much surprised at, as you must suppose me anxious to learn that your express arrived. I think he must have reached you before post-hours, and James or you *might* have found a minute to say so in a single line. I once more request that you will be a business-like correspondent, and state your provisions for every week prospectively. I do not expect you to *warrant them*, which you rather perversely seem to insist is my wish, but I do want to be aware of their nature and extent, that I may provide against the possibility of miscarriage. The calendar, to which you refer me, tells me what sums are due, but cannot tell your shifts to pay them, which are naturally altering with circumstances, and of which alterations I request to have due notice. You say you *could not suppose* Sir W. Forbes would have refused the long dated bills; but that you *had* such an apprehension is clear, both because in the calendar these bills were rated two months lower, and because, three days before, you wrote me an enigmatical expression of your apprehensions, in-

Digitized by Google

stead of saying plainly there was a chance of your wanting £350, when I would have sent you an order to be used conditionally.

"All I desire is unlimited confidence and frequent correspondence, and that you will give me weekly at least the fullest anticipation of your resources, and the probability of their being effectual. I may be disappointed in my own, of which you shall have equally timeous notice. Omit no exertions to procure the use of money, even for a month or six weeks, for time is most precious. The large balance due in January from the trade, and individuals, which I cannot reckon at less than £4000, will put us finally to rights; and it will be a shame to founder within sight of harbour. The greatest risk we run is from such ill-considered despatches as those of Friday. Suppose that I had gone to Drumlanrig—suppose the poney had set up—suppose a thousand things—and we were ruined for want of your telling your apprehensions in due time. Do not plague yourself to vindicate this sort of management; but if you have escaped the consequences (as to which you have left me uncertain), thank God, and act more cautiously another time. It was quite the same to me on what day I sent that draft; indeed it must have been so if I had the money in my cash account, and if I had not, the more time given me to provide it the better.

Digitized by Google

" Now, do not affect to suppose that my displeasure arises from your not having done your utmost to realize funds, and that utmost having failed. It is one mode, to be sure, of exculpation, to suppose one's self accused of something they are not charged with, and then to make a querulous or indignant defence, and complain of the injustice of the accuser. The head and front of your offending is precisely your not writing explicitly, and I request this may not happen again. It is your fault, and I believe arises either from an ill-judged idea of smoothing matters to me—as if I were not behind the curtain — or a general reluctance to allow that any danger is near, until it is almost unparriable. I shall be very sorry if anything I have said gives you pain; but the matter is too serious for all of us, to be passed over without giving you my explicit sentiments. To-morrow I set out for Drumlanrig, and shall not hear from you till Tuesday or Wednesday. Make yourself master of the post-town—Thornhill, probably, or Sanquhar. As Sir W. F. & Co. have cash to meet my order, nothing, I think, can have gone wrong, unless the boy perished by the way. Therefore, in faith and hope, and—that I may lack none of the Christian virtues—in charity with your dilatory worship, I remain very truly yours, W. S.'

Digitized by Google

Scott proceeded, accordingly, to join a gay and festive circle, whom the Duke of Buccleuch had assembled about him on first taking possession of the magnificent Castle of Drumlanrig, in Nithsdale, the principal messuage of the dukedom of Queensberry, which had recently lapsed into his family. But, *post equitem sedet atra cura* — another of John Ballantyne's unwelcome missives, rendered necessary by a neglect of precisely the same kind as before, reached him in the midst of this scene of rejoicing. On the 31st, he again writes:—

"*To Mr John Ballantyne, Bookseller, Edinburgh.*

"Drumlanrig, Friday.

"Dear John,

"I enclose the order. Unfortunately, the Drumlanrig post only goes thrice a-week; but the Marquis of Queensberry, who carries this to Dumfries, has promised that the guard of the mail-coach shall deliver it by five to-morrow. I was less anxious, as your note said you could clear this month. It is a cruel thing, that no State you furnish excludes the arising of such unexpected claims as this for the taxes on the printing-office. What unhappy management, to suffer them to run ahead in such a manner!—but it is in vain to complain. Were it

Digitized by Google

not for your strange concealments, I should anticipate no difficulty in winding up these matters. But who can reckon upon a State where claims are kept out of view until they are in the hands of a *writer?* If you have no time to say that *this* comes safe to hand, I suppose James may favour me so far. Yours truly, W. S.

"Let the guard be rewarded.

"Let me know exactly what you *can* do and *hope* to do for next month; for it signifies nothing raising money for you, unless I see it is to be of real service. Observe, I make you responsible for nothing but a fair statement.* The guard is known to the Marquis, who has good-naturedly promised to give him this letter with his own hand; so it must reach you in time, though probably past five on Saturday."

Another similar application reached Scott the day after the guard delivered his packet. He writes thus, in reply:—

---

* John Ballantyne had embarked no capital—not a shilling—in the business; and was bound by the contract to limit himself to an allowance of £300 a-year, in consideration of his *management*, until there should be an overplus of profits!—[1839.]

Digitized by Google

"*To Mr John Ballantyne.*

"Drumlanrig, Sunday.

"Dear John,

"I trust you got my letter yesterday by five, with the draft enclosed. I return your draft accepted. On Wednesday I think of leaving this place, where, but for these damned affairs, I should have been very happy. W. S."

Scott had been for some time under an engagement to meet the Marquis of Abercorn at Carlisle, in the first week of August, for the transaction of some business connected with his brother Thomas's late administration of that nobleman's Scottish affairs; and he had designed to pass from Drumlanrig to Carlisle for this purpose, without going back to Abbotsford. In consequence of these repeated harassments, however, he so far altered his plans as to cut short his stay at Drumlanrig, and turn homewards for two or three days, where James Ballantyne met him with such a statement as in some measure relieved his mind.

He then proceeded to fulfil his engagement with Lord Abercorn, whom he encountered travelling in a rather peculiar style between Carlisle and Longtown. The ladies of the family and the household occupied four or five carriages, all drawn by the

Digitized by Google

Marquis's own horses, while the noble Lord himself brought up the rear, mounted on horseback, and decorated with the ribbon of the order of the Garter. On meeting the cavalcade, Scott turned with them, and he was not a little amused when they reached the village of Longtown, which he had ridden through an hour or two before, with the preparations which he found there made for the dinner of the party. The Marquis's major-domo and cook had arrived there at an early hour in the morning, and everything was now arranged for his reception in the paltry little public-house, as nearly as possible in the style usual in his own lordly mansions. The ducks and geese that had been dabbling three or four hours ago in the village-pond were now ready to make their appearance under numberless disguises as *entrées;* a regular bill-of-fare flanked the noble Marquis's allotted cover; every huckaback towel in the place had been pressed to do service as a napkin; and, that nothing might be wanting to the mimicry of splendour, the landlady's poor remnants of crockery and pewter had been furbished up, and mustered in solemn order on a crazy old beauffet, which was to represent a sideboard worthy of Lucullus. I think it worth while to preserve this anecdote, which Scott delighted in telling, as perhaps the last relic of a style of manners now passed away, and never likely to be revived among us.

Digitized by Google

Having despatched this dinner and his business, Scott again turned southwards, intending to spend a few days with Mr Morritt at Rokeby; but on reaching Penrith, the landlord there, who was his old acquaintance (Mr Buchanan), placed a letter in his hands: *ecce iterum* — it was once more a cry of distress from John Ballantyne. He thus answered it:—

"*To Mr John Ballantyne.*

"Penrith, Aug. 10, 1813.

"Dear John,

"I enclose you an order for £350. I shall remain at Rokeby until Saturday or Sunday, and be at Abbotsford on Wednesday at latest.

"I hope the printing-office is going on well. I fear, from the state of accompts between the companies, restrictions on the management and expense will be unavoidable, which may trench upon James's comforts. I cannot observe hitherto that the printing-office is paying off, but rather adding to its embarrassments; and it cannot be thought that I have either means or inclination to support a losing concern at the rate of £200 a-month. If James could find a monied partner, an active man who understood the commercial part of the business, and would superintend the conduct of the cash, it might be the best for all parties; for I really am not ade-

Digitized by Google

quate to the fatigue of mind which these affairs occasion me, though I must do the best to struggle through them. Believe me yours, &c. W. S."

At Brough he encountered a messenger who brought him such a painful account of Mrs Morritt's health, that he abandoned his intention of proceeding to Rokeby; and, indeed, it was much better that he should be at Abbotsford again as soon as possible, for his correspondence shows a continued succession, during the three or four ensuing weeks, of the same annoyances that had pursued him to Drumlanrig and to Penrith. By his desire, the Ballantynes had, it would seem, before the middle of August, laid a statement of their affairs before Constable. Though the statement was not so clear and full as Scott had wished it to be, Constable, on considering it, at once assured them, that to go on raising money in driblets would never effectually relieve them; that, in short, one or both of the companies must stop, unless Mr Scott could find means to lay his hand, without farther delay, on at least £4000; and I gather that, by way of inducing Constable himself to come forward with part at least of this supply, John Baltyne again announced his intention of forthwith abandoning the bookselling business altogether, and making an effort to establish himself — on a plan which Constable had shortly before suggested — as

Digitized by Google

an auctioneer in Edinburgh. The following letters need no comment:—

"*To Mr John Ballantyne.*

"Abbotsford, Aug. 16, 1813.

"Dear John,

"I am quite satisfied it is impossible for J. B. and Co. to continue business longer than is absolutely necessary for the sale of stock and extrication of their affairs. The fatal injury which their credit has sustained, as well as your adopting a profession in which I sincerely hope you will be more fortunate. renders the closing of the bookselling business inevitable. With regard to the printing, it is my intention to retire from that also so soon as I can possibly do so with safety to myself, and with the regard I shall always entertain for James's interest. Whatever loss I may sustain will be preferable to the life I have lately led, when I seem surrounded by a sort of magic circle, which neither permits me to remain at home in peace, nor to stir abroad with pleasure. Your first exertion as an auctioneer may probably be on 'that distinguished, select, and inimitable collection of books, made by an amateur of this city retiring from business.' I do not feel either health or confidence in my own powers sufficient to authorize me to take a long price for a new poem, until these affairs shall have been in some measure digested. This idea has been long running in my

Digitized by Google

head, but the late fatalities which have attended this business have quite decided my resolution. I will write to James to-morrow, being at present annoyed with a severe headache. Yours truly,

W. SCOTT."

Were I to transcribe all the letters to which these troubles gave rise, I should fill a volume before I had reached the end of another twelvemonth. The two next I shall quote are dated on the same day (the 24th August), which may, in consequence of the answer the second of them received, be set down as determining the *crisis* of 1813.

"*To Mr James Ballantyne.*

"Abbotsford, 24th August 1813.

"Dear James,

"Mr Constable's advice is, as I have always found it, sound, sensible, and friendly—and I shall be guided by it. But I have no wealthy friend who would join in security with me to such an extent; and to apply in quarters where I might be refused, would ensure disclosure. I conclude John has shown Mr C. the state of the affairs; if not, I would wish him to do so directly. If the proposed accommodation could be granted to the firm on my personally joining in the security, the whole matter would be quite safe, for I have to receive in the course of the

Digitized by Google

winter some large sums from my father's estate.* Besides which, I shall certainly be able to go to press in November with a new poem; or, if Mr Constable's additional security would please the bankers better, I could ensure Mr C. against the possibility of loss, by assigning the copyrights, together with that of the new poem, or even my library, in his relief. In fact, if he looks into the affairs, he will I think see that there is no prospect of any eventual loss to the creditors, though I may be a loser myself. My property here is unincumbered; so is my house in Castle Street; and I have no debts out of my own family, excepting a part of the price of Abbotsford, which I am to retain for four years. So that, literally, I have no claims upon me unless those arising out of this business; and when it is considered that my income is above £2000 a-year, even if the printing-office pays nothing, I should hope no one can possibly be a loser by me. I am sure I would strip myself to my shirt rather than it should be the case; and my only reason for wishing to stop the concern was to do open justice to all persons. It must have been a bitter pill to me. I can more confidently expect some aid from Mr Constable, or from Long-

Clerkship,	£1300
Sheriffdom,	300
Mrs Scott,	200
Interest,	100
Somers, (say)	200
	£2100

* He probably alludes to the final settlement of accounts with the Marquis of Aoercorn.

Digitized by Google

man's house, because they can look into the concern and satisfy themselves how little chance there is of their being losers, which others cannot do. Perhaps between them they might manage to assist us with the credit necessary, and go on in winding up the concern by occasional acceptances.

"An odd thing has happened. I have a letter, by order of the Prince Regent, offering me the laureateship in the most flattering terms. Were I my own man, as you call it, I would refuse this offer (with all gratitude); but, as I am situated, £300 or £400 a-year is not to be sneezed at upon a point of poetical honour—and it makes me a better man to that extent. I have not yet written, however. I will say little about Constable's handsome behaviour, but shall not forget it. It is needless to say I shall wish him to be consulted in every step that is taken. If I should lose all I advanced to this business, I should be less vexed than I am at this moment. I am very busy with Swift at present, but shall certainly come to town if it is thought necessary; but I should first wish Mr Constable to look into the affairs to the bottom. Since I have personally superintended them, they have been winding up very fast, and we are now almost within sight of harbour. I will also own it was partly ill-humour at John's blunder last week that made me think of throwing things up. Yours truly, W. S."

Digitized by Google

After writing and despatching this letter, an idea occurred to Scott that there was a quarter, not hitherto alluded to in any of these anxious epistles, from which he might consider himself as entitled to ask assistance, not only with little, if any, chance of a refusal, but (owing to particular circumstances) without incurring any very painful sense of obligation. On the 25th he says to John Ballantyne—"After some meditation, last night, it occurred to me I had some title to ask the Duke of Buccleuch's guarantee to a cash-account for £4000, as Constable proposes. I have written to him accordingly, and have very little doubt that he will be my surety. If this cash-account be in view, Mr Constable will certainly *assist us* until the necessary writings are made out—I beg your pardon—I dare say I am very stupid; but very often you don't consider that I can't follow details which would be quite obvious to a man of business—for instance, you tell me daily, 'that *if* the sums I count upon *are* forthcoming, the results must be as I suppose.' But—in a week—the scene is changed, and all I can do, and more, is inadequate to bring about these results. I protest I don't know if at this moment £4000 *will* clear us out. After all, you are vexed, and so am I; and it is needless to wrangle who has a right to be angry. Commend me to James. Yours truly,

W. S."

Digitized by Google

Having explained to the Duke of Buccleuch the position in which he stood—obliged either to procure some guarantee which would enable him to raise £4000, or to sell abruptly all his remaining interest in the copyright of his works; and repeated the statement of his personal property and income, as given in the preceding letter to James Ballantyne —Scott says to his noble friend:—"I am not asking nor desiring any loan from your Grace, but merely the honour of your sanction to my credit as a good man for £4000; and the motive of your Grace's interference would be sufficiently obvious to the London Shylocks, as your constant kindness and protection is no secret to the world. Will your Grace consider whether you can do what I propose, in conscience and safety, and favour me with your answer?—I have a very flattering offer from the Prince Regent, of his own free motion, to make me poet-laureate; I am very much embarrassed by it. I am, on the one hand, afraid of giving offence where no one would willingly offend, and perhaps losing an opportunity of smoothing the way to my youngsters through life; on the other hand, the office is a ridiculous one, somehow or other—they and I should be well quizzed,—yet that I should not mind. My real feeling of reluctance lies deeper—it is, that favoured as I have been by the public, I should be considered, with some justice, I fear, as engrossing

Digitized by Google

a petty emolument which might do real service to some poorer brother of the Muses. I shall be most anxious to have your Grace's advice on this subject. There seems something churlish, and perhaps conceited, in repelling a favour so handsomely offered on the part of the Sovereign's representative—and on the other hand, I feel much disposed to shake myself free from it. I should make but a bad courtier, and an ode-maker is described by Pope as a poet out of his way or out of his senses. I will find some excuse for protracting my reply till I can have the advantage of your Grace's opinion; and remain, in the mean time, very truly

Your obliged and grateful

WALTER SCOTT.

"P. S.—I trust your Grace will not suppose me capable of making such a request as the enclosed, upon any idle or unnecessary speculation; but, as I stand situated, it is a matter of deep interest to me to prevent these copyrights from being disposed of either hastily or at under prices. I could have half the booksellers in London for my sureties, on a hint of a new poem; but bankers do not like people in trade, and my brains are not ready to spin another web. So your Grace must take me under your princely care, as in the days of lang syne; and I think I can say, upon the sincerity of an honest

Digitized by Google

man, there is not the most distant chance of your having any trouble or expense through my means."

The Duke's answer was in all respects such as might have been looked for from the generous kindness and manly sense of his character.

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Abbotsford.*

"Drumlanrig Castle, August 28th, 1813.

"My Dear Sir,

"I received yesterday your letter of the 24th. I shall with pleasure comply with your request of guaranteeing the £4000. You must, however, furnish me with the form of a letter to this effect, as I am completely ignorant of transactions of this nature.

"I am never willing to *offer* advice, but when my opinion is asked by a friend I am ready to give it. As to the offer of his Royal Highness to appoint you laureate, I shall frankly say that I should be mortified to see you hold a situation which, by the general concurrence of the world, is stamped ridiculous. There is no good reason why this should be so; but so it is. *Walter Scott, Poet Laureate,* ceases to be the Walter Scott of the Lay, Marmion, &c. Any future poem of yours would not come forward with the same probability of a successful

Digitized by Google

reception. The poet laureate would stick to you and your productions like a piece of *court plaster*. Your muse has hitherto been independent — don't put her into harness. We know how lightly she trots along when left to her natural paces, but do not try driving. I would write frankly and openly to His Royal Highness, but with respectful gratitude, for he *has* paid you a compliment. I would not fear to state that you had hitherto written when in poetic mood, but feared to trammel yourself with a fixed periodical exertion; and I cannot but conceive that His Royal Highness, who has much taste, will at once see the many objections which you must have to his proposal, but which you cannot write. Only think of being chaunted and recitatived by a parcel of hoarse and squeaking choristers on a birthday, for the edification of the bishops, pages, maids of honour, and gentlemen-pensioners! Oh, horrible, thrice horrible! Yours sincerely,

BUCCLEUCH, &c."

The letter which first announced the Prince Regent's proposal, was from his Royal Highness's librarian, Dr James Stanier Clarke; but before Scott answered it he had received a more formal notification from the late Marquis of Hertford, then Lord Chamberlain. I shall transcribe both these documents.

Digitized by Google

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.*

"Pavilion, Brighton, August 18, 1813.

"My Dear Sir,

"Though I have never had the honour of being introduced to you, you have frequently been pleased to convey to me very kind and flattering messages,* and I trust, therefore, you will allow me, without any further ceremony, to say—That I took an early opportunity this morning of seeing the Prince Regent, who arrived here late yesterday; and I then delivered to his Royal Highness my earnest wish and anxious desire that the vacant situation of poet laureate might be conferred on you. The Prince replied, 'that you had already been written to, and that if you wished it, everything would be settled as I could desire.'

"I hope, therefore, I may be allowed to congratulate you on this event. You are the man to whom it ought first to have been offered, and it gave me sincere pleasure to find that those sentiments of high approbation which my Royal Master had so often expressed towards you in private, were now so openly and honourably displayed in public. Have the goodness, dear sir, to receive this intrusive letter

* The Royal librarian had forwarded to Scott presentation copies of his successive publications—The Progress of Maritime Discovery — Falconer's Shipwreck, with a Life of the Author — Naufragia—A Life of Nelson, in two quarto volumes, &c. &c. &c.

Digitized by Google

with your accustomed courtesy, and believe me, yours very sincerely, J. S. CLARKE,

Librarian to H. R. H. the Prince Regent."

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.*

"Ragley, 31st August 1813.

"Sir,

"I thought it my duty to his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, to express to him my humble opinion that I could not make so creditable a choice as in your person for the office, now vacant, of poet laureate. I am now authorized to offer it to you, which I would have taken an earlier opportunity of doing, but that, till this morning, I have had no occasion of seeing his Royal Highness since Mr Pye's death. I have the honour to be, sir, your most obedient, humble servant,

INGRAM HERTFORD."

The following letters conclude this matter:—

"*To the Most Noble the Marquis of Hertford, &c. &c. Ragley, Warwickshire.*

"Abbotsford, 4th Sept.

"My Lord,

"I am this day honoured with your Lordship's

Digitized by Google

letter of the 31st August, tendering for my acceptance the situation of poet laureate in the Royal Household. I shall always think it the highest honour of my life to have been the object of the good opinion implied in your Lordship's recommendation, and in the gracious acquiescence of his Royal Highness the Prince Regent. I humbly trust I shall not forfeit sentiments so highly valued, although I find myself under the necessity of declining, with every acknowledgement of respect and gratitude, a situation above my deserts, and offered to me in a manner so very flattering. The duties attached to the office of poet laureate are not indeed very formidable, if judged of by the manner in which they have sometimes been discharged. But an individual selected from the literary characters of Britain, upon the honourable principle expressed in your Lordship's letter, ought not, in justice to your Lordship, to his own reputation, but above all to his Royal Highness, to accept of the office, unless he were conscious of the power of filling it respectably, and attaining to excellence in the execution of the tasks which it imposes. This confidence I am so far from possessing, that, on the contrary, with all the advantages which do now, and I trust ever will, present themselves to the poet whose task it may be to commemorate the events of his Royal Highness's administration, I am certain I should feel myself inadequate to the fitting discharge

Digitized by Google

of the regularly recurring duty of periodical composition, and should thus at once disappoint the expectation of the public, and, what would give me still more pain, discredit the nomination of his Royal Highness.

"Will your Lordship permit me to add, that though far from being wealthy, I already hold two official situations in the line of my profession, which afford a respectable income. It becomes me, therefore, to avoid the appearance of engrossing one of the few appointments which seem specially adapted for the provision of those whose lives have been dedicated exclusively to literature, and who too often derive from their labours more credit than emolument.

"Nothing could give me greater pain than being thought ungrateful to his Royal Highness's goodness, or insensible to the honourable distinction his undeserved condescension has been pleased to bestow upon me. I have to trust to your Lordship's kindness for laying at the feet of his Royal Highness, in the way most proper and respectful, my humble, grateful, and dutiful thanks, with these reasons for declining a situation which, though every way superior to my deserts, I should chiefly have valued as a mark of his Royal Highness's approbation.

For your Lordship's unmerited goodness, as well as for the trouble you have had upon this occasion,

Digitized by Google

I can only offer you my respectful thanks, and entreat that you will be pleased to believe me, my Lord Marquis, your Lordship's much obliged and much honoured humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

"*To His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch, &c.*
Drumlanrig Castle.

"Abbotsford, Sept. 5, 1813.

"My Dear Lord Duke,

"Good advice is easily followed when it jumps with our own sentiments and inclinations. I no sooner found mine fortified by your Grace's opinion than I wrote to Lord Hertford, declining the laurel in the most civil way I could imagine. I also wrote to the Prince's librarian, who had made himself active on the occasion, dilating at somewhat more length than I thought respectful to the Lord Chamberlain, my reasons for declining the intended honour. My wife has made a copy of the last letter, which I enclose for your Grace's perusal — there is no occasion either to preserve or return it — but I am desirous you should know what I have put my apology upon, for I may reckon on its being misrepresented. I certainly should never have survived the recitative described by your Grace — it is a part of

Digitized by Google

the etiquette I was quite unprepared for, and should have sunk under it. It is curious enough that Drumlanrig should always have been the refuge of bards who decline court promotion. Gay, I think, refused to be a gentleman-usher, or some such post;* and I am determined to abide by my post of Grand Ecuyer Trenchant of the Chateau, varied for that of tale-teller of an evening.

"I will send your Grace a copy of the letter of guarantee when I receive it from London. By an arrangement with Longman and Co., the great booksellers in Paternoster-row, I am about to be enabled to place their security, as well as my own, between your Grace and the possibility of hazard. But your kind readiness to forward a transaction which is of such great importance both to my fortune and comfort, can never be forgotten—although it can scarce make me more than I have always been, my dear Lord, your Grace's much obliged and truly faithful

WALTER SCOTT."

---

* Poor Gay—"In wit a man, simplicity a child,"—was insulted, on the accession of George II., by the offer of a gentleman-ushership to one of the royal infants. His prose and verse largely celebrate his obligations to Charles third Duke of Queensberry, and the charming Lady Catharine Hyde, his Duchess—under whose roof the poet spent the latter years of his life.

Digitized by Google

(COPY — ENCLOSURE.)

"*To the Rev. J. S. Clarke, &c. &c. &c.*
Pavilion, Brighton.

"Abbotsford, 4th September 1813.

"Sir,

"On my return to this cottage, after a short excursion, I was at once surprised and deeply interested by the receipt of your letter. I shall always consider it as the proudest incident of my life that his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, whose taste in literature is so highly distinguished, should have thought of naming me to the situation of poet laureate. I feel, therefore, no small embarrassment lest I should incur the suspicion of churlish ingratitude in declining an appointment in every point of view so far above my deserts, but which I should chiefly have valued as conferred by the unsolicited generosity of his Royal Highness, and as entitling me to the distinction of terming myself an immediate servant of his Majesty. But I have to trust to your goodness in representing to his Royal Highness, with my most grateful, humble, and dutiful acknowledgements, the circumstances which compel me to decline the honour which his undeserved favour has proposed for me. The poetical pieces I have hitherto

Digitized by Google

composed have uniformly been the hasty production of impulses, which I must term fortunate, since they have attracted his Royal Highness's notice and approbation. But I strongly fear, or rather am absolutely certain, that I should feel myself unable to justify, in the eye of the public, the choice of his Royal Highness, by a fitting discharge of the duties of an office which requires stated and periodical exertion. And although I am conscious how much this difficulty is lessened under the government of his Royal Highness, marked by paternal wisdom at home and successes abroad which seem to promise the liberation of Europe, I still feel that the necessity of a regular commemoration would trammel my powers of composition at the very time when it would be equally my pride and duty to tax them to the uttermost. There is another circumstance which weighs deeply in my mind while forming my present resolution. I have already the honour to hold two appointments under Government, not usually conjoined, and which afford an income, far indeed from wealth, but amounting to decent independence. I fear, therefore, that in accepting one of the few situations which our establishment holds forth as the peculiar provision of literary men, I might be justly censured as availing myself of his Royal Highness's partiality to engross more than my share of the public revenue, to the prejudice of competitors equally meritorious at least.

Digitized by Google

and otherwise unprovided for; and as this calculation will be made by thousands who know that I have reaped great advantages by the favour of the public, without being aware of the losses which it has been my misfortune to sustain, I may fairly reckon that it will terminate even more to my prejudice than if they had the means of judging accurately of my real circumstances. I have thus far, sir, frankly exposed to you, for his Royal Highness's favourable consideration, the feelings which induce me to decline an appointment offered in a manner so highly calculated to gratify, I will not say my vanity only, but my sincere feelings of devoted attachment to the crown and constitution of my country, and to the person of his Royal Highness, by whom its government has been so worthily administered. No consideration on earth would give me so much pain as the idea of my real feelings being misconstrued on this occasion, or that I should be supposed stupid enough not to estimate the value of his Royal Highness's favour, or so ungrateful as not to feel it as I ought. And you will relieve me from great anxiety if you will have the goodness to let me know if his Royal Highness is pleased to receive favourably my humble and grateful apology.

"I cannot conclude without expressing my sense of your kindness and of the trouble you have had

Digitized by Google

upon this account, and I request you will believe me, sir, your obliged humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

"*To Robert Southey, Esq., Keswick.*

"Abbotsford, 4th September 1813.

"My Dear Southey,

"On my return here I found, to my no small surprise, a letter tendering me the laurel vacant by the death of the poetical Pye. I have declined the appointment, as being incompetent to the task of annual commemoration; but chiefly as being provided for in my professional department, and unwilling to incur the censure of engrossing the emolument attached to one of the few appointments which seems proper to be filled by a man of literature who has no other views in life. Will you forgive me, my dear friend, if I own I had you in my recollection. I have given Croker the hint, and otherwise endeavoured to throw the office into your option. I am uncertain if you will like it, for the laurel has certainly been tarnished by some of its wearers, and, as at present managed, its duties are inconvenient and somewhat liable to ridicule. But the latter matter might be amended, as I think the Regent's good sense would lead him to lay aside these regular commemorations;

Digitized by Google

and as to the former point, it has been worn by Dryden of old, and by Warton in modern days. If you quote my own refusal against me, I reply — first, I have been luckier than you in holding two offices not usually conjoined; secondly, I did not refuse it from any foolish prejudice against the situation, otherwise how durst I mention it to you, my elder brother in the muse? — but from a sort of internal hope that they would give it to you, upon whom it would be so much more worthily conferred. For I am not such an ass as not to know that you are my better in poetry, though I have had, probably but for a time, the tide of popularity in my favour. I have not time to add ten thousand other reasons, but I only wished to tell you how the matter was, and to beg you to think before you reject the offer which I flatter myself will be made to you. If I had not been, like Dogberry, a fellow with two gowns already, I should have jumped at it like a cock at a gooseberry. Ever yours most truly, WALTER SCOTT."

Immediately after Mr Croker received Scott's letter here alluded to, Mr Southey was invited to accept the vacant laurel. But, as the birthday ode had been omitted since the illness of King George III., and the Regent had good sense and good taste enough to hold that ancient custom as "more honoured in the breach than the observance," the whole

Digitized by Google

fell completely into disuse.* The office was thus relieved from the burden of ridicule which had, in spite of so many illustrious names, adhered to it; and though its emoluments did not in fact amount to more than a quarter of the sum at which Scott rated them when he declined it, they formed no unacceptable addition to Mr Southey's income. Scott's answer to his brother poet's affectionate and grateful letter on the conclusion of this affair, is as follows:—

"*To R. Southey, Esq., Keswick.*

"Edinburgh, November 13, 1813.

"I do not delay, my dear Southey, to say my *gratulor*. Long may you live, as Paddy says, to rule over us, and to redeem the crown of Spenser and of Dryden to its pristine dignity. I am only discontented with the extent of your royal revenue, which I thought had been £400, or £300 at the very least. Is there no getting rid of that iniquitous modus, and requiring the *butt* in kind? I would have you think of it; I know no man so well entitled to Xeres sack as yourself, though many bards would

* See the Preface to the third volume of the late Collective Edition of Mr Southey's Poems, p. xii., where he corrects a trivial error I had fallen into in the first edition of these Memoirs, and adds, "Sir Walter's conduct was, as it always was, characteristically generous, and in the highest degree friendly."—[1839.]

Digitized by Google

make a better figure at drinking it. I should think that in due time a memorial might get some relief in this part of the appointment — it should be at least £100 wet and £100 dry. When you have carried your point of discarding the ode, and my point of getting the sack, you will be exactly in the situation of Davy in the farce, who stipulates for more wages, less work, and the key of the ale-cellar.* I was greatly delighted with the circumstances of your investiture. It reminded me of the porters at Calais with Dr Smollett's baggage, six of them seizing upon one small portmanteau, and bearing it in triumph to his lodgings. You see what it is to laugh at the superstitions of a gentleman-usher, as I think you do somewhere. 'The whirligig of time brings in his revenges.'†

"Adieu, my dear Southey; my best wishes attend all that you do, and my best congratulations every good that attends you — yea even this, the very least of Providence's mercies, as a poor clergyman said when pronouncing grace over a herring. I should like to know how the Prince received you; his address is said to be excellent, and his knowledge of literature far from despicable. What a change of fortune even since the short time when we met! The great work of retribution is now roll-

* Garrick's *Bon Ton, or High Life Above Stairs.*

† *Twelfth Night, Act V. Scene* 1.

Digitized by Google

ing onward to consummation, yet am I not fully satisfied—*pereat iste!*—there will be no permanent peace in Europe till Buonaparte sleeps with the tyrants of old. My best compliments attend Mrs Southey and your family. Ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT."

To avoid returning to the affair of the laureateship, I have placed together such letters concerning it as appeared important. I regret to say that, had I adhered to the chronological order of Scott's correspondence, ten out of every twelve letters between the date of his application to the Duke of Buccleuch, and his removal to Edinburgh on the 12th of November, would have continued to tell the same story of pecuniary difficulty, urgent and almost daily applications for new advances to the Ballantynes, and endeavours, more or less successful, but in no case effectually so, to relieve the pressure on the bookselling firm by sales of its heavy stock to the great publishing houses of Edinburgh and London. Whatever success these endeavours met with, appears to have been due either directly or indirectly to Mr Constable; who did a great deal more than prudence would have warranted, in taking on himself the results of its unhappy adventures,—and, by his sagacious advice, enabled the distressed partners to procure similar assistance at the hands of others.

Digitized by Google

who did not partake his own feelings of personal kindness and sympathy. "I regret to learn," Scott writes to him on the 16th October, "that there is great danger of your exertions in our favour, which once promised so fairly, proving finally abortive, or at least being too tardy in their operation to work out our relief. If anything more can be honourably and properly done to avoid a most unpleasant shock, I shall be most willing to do it; if not — God's will be done! There will be enough of property, including my private fortune, to pay every claim; and I have not used prosperity so ill, as greatly to fear adversity. But these things we will talk over at meeting; meanwhile believe me, with a sincere sense of your kindness and friendly views, very truly yours, W. S."—I have no wish to quote more largely from the letters which passed during this crisis between Scott and his partners. The pith and substance of his, to John Ballantyne at least, seems to be summed up in one brief *postscript:*—"For God's sake treat me as a man, and not as a milch-cow!"

The difficulties of the Ballantynes were by this time well known throughout the commercial circles not only of Edinburgh, but of London; and a report of their actual bankruptcy, with the addition that Scott was engaged as their surety to the extent of £20,000, found its way to Mr Morritt about the beginning of November. This dear friend wrote to

Digitized by Google

him, in the utmost anxiety, and made liberal offers of assistance in case the catastrophe might still be averted; but the term of Martinmas, always a critical one in Scotland, had passed before this letter reached Edinburgh, and Scott's answer will show symptoms of a clearing horizon. I think also there is one expression in it which could hardly have failed to convey to Mr Morritt that his friend was involved, more deeply than he had ever acknowledged, in the concerns of the Messrs Ballantyne.

"*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., Rokeby Park.*

"Edinburgh, 20th November 1813.

"I did not answer your very kind letter, my dear Morritt, until I could put your friendly heart to rest upon the report you have heard, which I could not do entirely until this term of Martinmas was passed. I have the pleasure to say that there is no truth whatever in the Ballantynes' reported bankruptcy. They have had severe difficulties for the last four months to make their resources balance the demands upon them, and I, having the price of Rokeby, and other monies in their hands, have had considerable reason for apprehension, and no slight degree of plague and trouble. They have, however, been so well supported, that I have got out of hot water

Digitized by Google

upon their account. They are winding up their bookselling concern with great regularity, and are to abide hereafter by the printing-office, which, with its stock, &c., will revert to them fairly.

"I have been able to redeem the offspring of my brain, and they are like to pay me like grateful children. This matter has set me a thinking about money more seriously than ever I did in my life, and I have begun by insuring my life for £4000, to secure some ready cash to my family should I slip girths suddenly. I think my other property, library, &c., may be worth about £12,000, and I have not much debt.

"Upon the whole, I see no prospect of any loss whatever. Although in the course of human events I may be disappointed, there certainly *can* be none to vex your kind and affectionate heart on my account. I am young, with a large official income, and if I lose anything now, I have gained a great deal in my day I cannot tell you, and will not attempt to tell you, how much I was affected by your letter—so much, indeed, that for several days I could not make my mind up to express myself on the subject. Thank God! all real danger was yesterday put over—and I will write, in two or three days, a funny letter, without any of these vile cash matters, of which it may be said there is no living with them nor without them. Ever yours, most truly,

WALTER SCOTT."

Digitized by Google

All these annoyances produced no change whatever in Scott's habits of literary industry. During these anxious months of September, October, and November, he kept feeding James Ballantyne's press, from day to day, both with the annotated text of the closing volumes of Swift's works, and with the MS. of his Life of the Dean. He had also proceeded to mature in his own mind the plan of the Lord of the Isles, and executed such a portion of the First Canto as gave him confidence to renew his negotiation with Constable for the sale of the whole, or part of its copyright. It was, moreover, at this period, that, looking into an old cabinet in search of some fishing-tackle, his eye chanced to light once more on the Ashestiel fragment of *Waverley*. — He read over those introductory chapters — thought they had been undervalued — and determined to finish the story.

All this while, too, he had been subjected to those interruptions from idle strangers, which from the first to the last imposed so heavy a tax on his celebrity; and he no doubt received such guests with all his usual urbanity of attention. Yet I was not surprised to discover, among his hasty notes to the Ballantynes, several of tenour akin to the following specimens: —

" Sept. 2d, 1813.

" My temper is really worn to a hair's breadth.

Digitized by Google

The intruder of yesterday hung on me till twelve to-day. When I had just taken my pen, he was relieved, like a sentry leaving guard, by two other lounging visitors; and their post has now been supplied by some people on real business."

Again —

"*Monday Evening.*

"Oh James! oh James! Two Irish dames
Oppress me very sore;
I groaning send one sheet I've penned—
For, hang them! there's no more."

A scrap of nearly the same date to his brother Thomas may be introduced, as belonging to the same state of feeling—"Dear Tom, I observe what you say as to Mr * * * *; and as you may often be exposed to similar requests, which it would be difficult to parry, you can sign such letters of introduction as relate to persons whom you do not delight to honour short, *T. Scott;* by which abridgement of your name I shall understand to limit my civilities."

It is proper to mention, that, in the very agony of these perplexities, the unfortunate Maturin received from him a timely succour of £50, rendered doubly acceptable by the kind and judicious letter of advice in which it was enclosed; and I have before me ample evidence that his benevolence had been ex-

Digitized by Google

tended to other struggling brothers of the trade, even when he must often have had actual difficulty to meet the immediate expenditure of his own family. All this, however, will not surprise the reader.

Nor did his general correspondence suffer much interruption; and, as some relief after so many painful details, I shall close the narrative of this anxious year by a few specimens of his miscellaneous communications:—

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie, Hampstead.*

"Abbotsford, Sept. 12, 1813.

"My Dear Miss Baillie,

"I have been a vile lazy correspondent, having been strolling about the country, and indeed a little way into England, for the greater part of July and August; in short, 'aye skipping here and there,' like the Tanner of Tamworth's horse. Since I returned, I have had a gracious offer of the laurel on the part of the Prince Regent. You will not wonder that I have declined it, though with every expression of gratitude which such an unexpected compliment demanded. Indeed, it would be high imprudence in one having literary reputation to maintain, to accept of an offer which obliged him to produce a poetical exercise on a given theme twice a-year; and besides,

Digitized by Google

as my loyalty to the royal family is very sincere, I would not wish to have it thought mercenary. The public has done its part by me very well, and so has Government: and I thought this little literary provision ought to be bestowed on one who has made literature his sole profession. If the Regent means to make it respectable, he will abolish the foolish custom of the annual odes, which is a drudgery no person of talent could ever willingly encounter—or come clear off from, if he was so rash. And so, peace be with the laurel,

'Profaned by Cibber and contemned by Gray.'

"I was for a fortnight at Drumlanrig, a grand old chateau, which has descended, by the death of the late Duke of Queensberry, to the Duke of Buccleuch. It is really a most magnificent pile, and when embosomed amid the wide forest scenery, of which I have an infantine recollection, must have been very romantic. But old Q. made wild devastation among the noble trees, although some fine ones are still left, and a quantity of young shoots are, in despite of the want of every kind of attention, rushing up to supply the places of the fathers of the forest from whose stems they are springing. It will now I trust be in better hands, for the reparation of the castle goes hand in hand with the rebuilding of all the cottages, in which an aged race of pensioners of Duke Charles,

Digitized by Google

and his pious wife, — 'Kitty, blooming, young and gay,' — have, during the last reign, been pining into rheumatisms and agues, in neglected poverty.

"All this is beautiful to witness; the indoor work does not please me so well, though I am aware that, to those who are to inhabit an old castle, it becomes often a matter of necessity to make alterations by which its tone and character are changed for the worse. Thus a noble gallery, which ran the whole length of the front, is converted into bedrooms — very comfortable, indeed, but not quite so magnificent; and as grim a dungeon as ever knave or honest man was confined in, is in some danger of being humbled into a wine-cellar. It is almost impossible to draw your breath, when you recollect that this, so many feet under ground, and totally bereft of air and light, was built for the imprisonment of human beings, whether guilty, suspected, or merely unfortunate. Certainly, if our frames are not so hardy, our hearts are softer than those of our forefathers, although probably a few years of domestic war, or feudal oppression, would bring us back to the same case-hardening both in body and sentiment.

"I meant to have gone to Rokeby, but was prevented by Mrs Morritt being unwell, which I very much regret, as I know few people that deserve better health. I am very glad you have known them, and I pray you to keep up the acquaintance in win-

Digitized by Google

ter. I am glad to see by this day's paper that our friend Terry has made a favourable impression on his first appearance at Covent-Garden — he has got a very good engagement there for three years, at twelve guineas a-week, which is a handsome income. — This little place comes on as fast as can be reasonably hoped; and the pinasters are all above the ground, but cannot be planted out for twelve months. My kindest compliments — in which Mrs Scott always joins — attend Miss Agnes, the Doctor, and his family. Ever, my dear friend, yours most faithfully,

WALTER SCOTT."

"*To Daniel Terry, Esq., London.*

"Abbotsford, 20th October 1813.

"Dear Terry,

"You will easily believe that I was greatly pleased to hear from you. I had already learned from The Courier (what I had anticipated too strongly to doubt for one instant) your favourable impression on the London public. I think nothing can be more judicious in the managers than to exercise the various powers you possess, in their various extents. A man of genius is apt to be limited to one single style, and to become per force a mannerist, merely because the public is not so just to its own amusement as to give

Digitized by Google

him an opportunity of throwing himself into different lines; and doubtless the exercise of our talents in one unvaried course, by degrees renders them incapable of any other, as the over use of any one limb of our body gradually impoverishes the rest. I shall be anxious to hear that you have played *Malvolio*, which is, I think, one of your *coups-de-maître*, and in which envy itself cannot affect to trace an imitation. That same charge of imitation, by the way, is one of the surest scents upon which dunces are certain to open. Undoubtedly, if the same character is well performed by two individuals, their acting must bear a general resemblance — it could not be well performed by both were it otherwise. But this general resemblance, which arises from both following nature and their author, can as little be termed imitation as the river in Wales can be identified with that of Macedon. Never mind these dunderheads, but go on your own way, and scorn to laugh on the right side of your mouth, to make a difference from some ancient comedian who, in the same part, always laughed on the left. Stick to the public—be uniform in your exertions to study even those characters which have little in them, and to give a grace which you cannot find in the author. Audiences are always grateful for this—or rather—for gratitude is as much out of the question in the Theatre, as Bernadotte says to Boney it is amongst sovereigns—or rather, the au-

Digitized by Google

dience is gratified by receiving pleasure from a part which they had no expectation would afford them any. It is in this view that, had I been of your profession, and possessed talents, I think I should have liked often those parts with which my brethren quarrelled, and studied to give them an effect which their intrinsic merit did not entitle them to. I have some thoughts of being in town in spring (not resolutions by any means); and it will be an additional motive to witness your success, and to find you as comfortably established as your friends in Castle Street earnestly hope and trust you will be.

"The summer—an uncommon summer in beauty and serenity—has glided away from us at Abbotsford, amidst our usual petty cares and petty pleasures. The children's garden is in apple-pie order, our own completely cropped and stocked, and all the trees flourishing like the green bay of the Psalmist. I have been so busy about our domestic arrangements, that I have not killed six hares this season. Besides, I have got a cargo of old armour, sufficient to excite a suspicion that I intend to mount a squadron of cuirassiers. I only want a place for my armoury; and, thank God, I can wait for that, these being no times for building. And this brings me to the loss of poor Stark, with whom more genius has died than is left behind among the collected universality of Scottish architects. O, Lord!—but what does it

Digitized by Google

signify?—Earth was born to bear, and man to pay (that is, lords, nabobs, Glasgow traders, and those who have wherewithal)—so wherefore grumble at great castles and cottages, with which the taste of the latter contrives to load the back of Mother Terra?—I have no hobby-horsical commissions at present, unless if you meet the Voyages of Captain Richard, or Robert Falconer, in one volume—'cow-heel, quoth Sancho'—I mark them for my own. Mrs Scott, Sophia, Anne, and the boys, unite in kind remembrances. Ever yours truly,

W. SCOTT."

"*To the Right Hon. Lord Byron, 4 Bennet Street, St James's, London.*

"Abbotsford, 6th Nov. 1813.

"My Dear Lord,

"I was honoured with your Lordship's letter of the 27th September,* and have sincerely to regret that there is such a prospect of your leaving Britain, without my achieving your personal acquaintance. I heartily wish your Lordship had come down to Scotland this season, for I have never seen a finer,

* The letter in question has not been preserved in Scott's collection of correspondence. This leaves some allusions in the answer obscure.

Digitized by Google

and you might have renewed all your old associations with Caledonia, and made such new ones as were likely to suit you. I dare promise you would have liked me well enough—for I have many properties of a Turk—never trouble myself about futurity—am as lazy as the day is long—delight in collecting silver-mounted pistols and ataghans, and go out of my own road for no one—all which I take to be attributes of your good Moslem. Moreover, I am somewhat an admirer of royalty, and in order to maintain this part of my creed, I shall take care never to be connected with a court, but stick to the *ignotum pro mirabili.*

"The author of the Queen's Wake will be delighted with your approbation. He is a wonderful creature for his opportunities, which were far inferior to those of the generality of Scottish peasants. Burns, for instance—(not that their extent of talents is to be compared for an instant)—had an education not much worse than the sons of many gentlemen in Scotland. But poor Hogg literally could neither read nor write till a very late period of his life; and when he first distinguished himself by his poetical talent, could neither spell nor write grammar. When I first knew him, he used to send me his poetry, and was both indignant and horrified when I pointed out to him parallel passages in authors whom he had never read, but whom all the world would have

Digitized by Google

sworn he had copied. An evil fate has hitherto attended him, and baffled every attempt that has been made to place him in a road to independence. But I trust he may be more fortunate in future.

"I have not yet seen Southey in the Gazette as Laureate. He is a real poet, such as we read of in former times, with every atom of his soul and every moment of his time dedicated to literary pursuits, in which he differs from almost all those who have divided public attention with him. Your Lordship's habits of society, for example, and my own professional and official avocations, must necessarily connect us much more with our respective classes in the usual routine of pleasure or business, than if we had not any other employment than *vacare musis*. But Southey's ideas are all poetical, and his whole soul dedicated to the pursuit of literature. In this respect, as well as in many others, he is a most striking and interesting character.

"I am very much interested in all that concerns your Giaour, which is universally approved of among our mountains. I have heard no objection except by one or two geniuses, who run over poetry as a cat does over a harpischord, and they affect to complain of obscurity. On the contrary, I hold every real lover of the art is obliged to you for condensing the narrative, by giving us only those striking scenes which you have shown to be so susceptible of poetic

Digitized by Google

ornament, and leaving to imagination the says I's and says he's, and all the minutiæ of detail which might be proper in giving evidence before a court of justice. The truth is, I think poetry is most striking when the mirror can be held up to the reader, and the same kept constantly before his eyes; it requires most uncommon powers to support a direct and downright narration; nor can I remember many instances of its being successfully maintained even by our greatest bards.

"As to those who have done me the honour to take my rhapsodies for their model, I can only say they have exemplified the ancient adage, 'one fool makes many;' nor do I think I have yet had much reason to suppose I have given rise to anything of distinguished merit. The worst is, it draws on me letters and commendatory verses, to which my sad and sober thanks in humble prose are deemed a most unmeet and ungracious reply. Of this sort of plague your Lordship must ere now have had more than your share, but I think you can hardly have met with so original a request as concluded the letter of a bard I this morning received, who limited his demands to being placed in his due station on Parnassus—*and* invested with a post in the Edinburgh Custom House.

"What an awakening of dry bones seems to be taking place on the Continent! I could as soon have

Digitized by Google

believed in the resurrection of the Romans as in that of the Prussians—yet it seems a real and active renovation of national spirit. It will certainly be strange enough if that tremendous pitcher, which has travelled to so many fountains, should be at length broken on the banks of the Saale; but from the highest to the lowest we are the fools of fortune. Your Lordship will probably recollect where the Oriental tale occurs, of a Sultan who consulted Solomon on the proper inscription for a signet-ring, requiring that the maxim which it conveyed should be at once proper for moderating the presumption of prosperity and tempering the pressure of adversity. The apophthegm supplied by the Jewish sage was, I think, admirably adapted for both purposes, being comprehended in the words 'And this also shall pass away.'

"When your Lordship sees Rogers, will you remember me kindly to him? I hope to be in London next spring, and renew my acquaintance with my friends there. It will be an additional motive if I could flatter myself that your Lordship's stay in the country will permit me the pleasure of waiting upon you. I am, with much respect and regard, your Lordship's truly honoured and obliged humble servant, WALTER SCOTT.

"I go to Edinburgh next week, *multum gemens.*"

Digitized by Google

" *To Miss Joanna Baillie, Hampstead.*

" Edinburgh, 10th Dec. 1813.

" Many thanks, my dear friend, for your kind token of remembrance, which I yesterday received. I ought to blush, if I had grace enough left, at my long and ungenerous silence: but what shall I say? The habit of procrastination, which had always more or less a dominion over me, does not relax its sway as I grow older and less willing to take up the pen. I have not written to dear Ellis this age,—yet there is not a day that I do not think of you and him, and one or two other friends in your southern land. I am very glad the whisky came safe: do not stint so laudable an admiration for the liquor of Caledonia, for I have plenty of right good and sound Highland Ferintosh, and I can always find an opportunity of sending you up a bottle.

" We are here almost mad with the redemption of Holland, which has an instant and gratifying effect on the trade of Leith, and indeed all along the east coast of Scotland. About £100,000 worth of various commodities, which had been dormant in cellars and warehouses, was sold the first day the news arrived, and Orange ribbons and *Orange Boven* was the order of the day among all ranks. It is a most miraculous revivification which it has been our fate

Digitized by Google

to witness. Though of a tolerably sanguine temper, I had fairly adjourned all hopes and expectations of the kind till another generation: the same power, however, that opened the windows of heaven and the fountains of the great deep, has been pleased to close them, and to cause his wind to blow upon the face of the waters, so that we may look out from the ark of our preservation, and behold the re-appearance of the mountain crests, and old, beloved, and well-known landmarks, which we had deemed swallowed up for ever in the abyss: the dove with the olive branch would complete the simile, but of that I see little hope. Buonaparte is that desperate gambler, who will not rise while he has a stake left; and, indeed, to be King of France would be a poor pettifogging enterprise, after having been almost Emperor of the World. I think he will drive things on, till the fickle and impatient people over whom he rules get tired of him and shake him out of the saddle. Some circumstances seem to intimate his having become jealous of the Senate; and indeed anything like a representative body, however imperfectly constructed, becomes dangerous to a tottering tyranny. The sword displayed on both frontiers may, like that brandished across the road of Balaam, terrify even dumb and irrational subjection into utterance: but enough of politics, though now a more cheerful subject than they have been for many years past.

Digitized by Google

"I have had a strong temptation to go to the Continent this Christmas; and should certainly have done so, had I been sure of getting from Amsterdam to Frankfort, where, as I know Lord Aberdeen and Lord Cathcart, I might expect a welcome. But notwithstanding my earnest desire to see the allied armies cross the Rhine, which I suppose must be one of the grandest military spectacles in the world, I should like to know that the roads were tolerably secure, and the means of getting forward attainable. In spring, however, if no unfortunate change takes place, I trust to visit the camp of the allies, and see all the pomp and power and circumstance of war, which I have so often imagined, and sometimes attempted to embody in verse.—Johnnie Richardson is a good, honourable, kind-hearted little fellow as lives in the world, with a pretty taste for poetry, which he has wisely kept under subjection to the occupation of drawing briefs and revising conveyances. It is a great good fortune to him to be in your neighbourhood, as he is an idolator of genius, and where could he offer up his worship so justly? And I am sure you will like him, for he is really 'officious, innocent, sincere.'* Terry, I hope, will get on well; he is industrious, and zealous for the honour of his art.

* Scott's old friend, Mr. John Richardson, had shortly before this time taken a house in Miss Baillie's neighbourhood, on Hampstead Heath.

Digitized by Google

Ventidius must have been an excellent part for him, hovering between tragedy and comedy, which is precisely what will suit him. We have a woful want of him here, both in public and private, for he was one of the most easy and quiet chimney-corner companions that I have had for these two or three years past.

"I am very glad if anything I have written to you could give pleasure to Miss Edgeworth, though I am sure it will fall very short of the respect which I have for her brilliant talents. I always write to you *à la volée*, and trust implicitly to your kindness and judgment upon all occasions where you may choose to communicate any part of my letters.* As to the taxing men, I must battle them as I can: they are worse than the great Emathian conqueror, who

> 'bade spare
> The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
> Went to the ground.'†

Your pinasters are coming up gallantly in the nursery-bed at Abbotsford. I trust to pay the whole establishment a Christmas visit, which will be, as Robinson Crusoe says of his glass of rum, 'to mine exceeding refreshment.' All Edinburgh have been

* Miss Baillie had apologized to him for having sent an extract of one of his letters to her friend at Edgeworthstown.

† Milton — *Sonnet No. VIII.*

Digitized by Google

on tiptoe to see Madame de Staël, but she is now not likely to honour us with a visit, at which I cannot prevail on myself to be very sorry; for as I tired of some of her works, I am afraid I should disgrace my taste by tiring of the authoress too. All my little people are very well, learning, with great pain and diligence, much which they will have forgotten altogether, or nearly so, in the course of twelve years hence; but the habit of learning is something in itself, even when the lessons are forgotten.

"I must not omit to tell you that a friend of mine, with whom that metal is more plenty than with me, has given me some gold mohurs to be converted into a ring for enchasing King Charles' hair; but this is not to be done until I get to London, and get a very handsome pattern. Ever, most truly and sincerely, yours, W. SCOTT."

The last sentence of this letter refers to a lock of the hair of Charles I., which, at Dr Baillie's request, Sir Henry Halford had transmitted to Scott when the royal martyr's remains were discovered at Windsor, in April 1813. Sir John Malcolm had given him some Indian coins to supply virgin gold for the setting of this relic; and for some years he constantly wore the ring, which is a massive and beautiful one, with the word REMEMBER surrounding it in highly relieved black-letter.

Digitized by Google

The poet's allusion to "taxing men" may require another word of explanation. To add to his troubles during this autumn of 1813, a demand was made on him by the commissioners of the income-tax, to return in one of their schedules an account of the profits of his literary exertions during the three last years. He demurred to this, and took the opinion of high authorities in Scotland, who confirmed him in his impression that the claim was beyond the statute. The grounds of his resistance are thus briefly stated in one of his letters to his legal friend in London:—

"*To John Richardson, Esq., Fludyer Street, Westminster.*

"My Dear Richardson,

"I have owed you a letter this long time, but perhaps my debt might not yet be discharged, had I not a little matter of business to trouble you with. I wish you to lay before either the King's counsel, or Sir Samuel Romilly and any other you may approve, the point whether a copyright, being sold for the term during which Queen Anne's act warranted the property to the author, the price is liable in payment of the property-tax. I contend it is not so liable, for the following reasons:—1*st*, It is a patent right, expected to produce an annual, or at least an

Digitized by Google

incidental profit, during the currency of many years; and surely it was never contended that if a man sold a theatrical patent, or a patent for machinery, property-tax should be levied in the first place on the full price as paid to the seller, and then on the profits as purchased by the buyer. I am not very expert at figures, but I think it clear that a double taxation takes place. 2*d*, It should be considered that a book may be the work not of one year, but of a man's whole life; and as it has been found, in a late case of the Duke of Gordon, that a fall of timber was not subject to property-tax because it comprehended the produce of thirty years, it seems at least equally fair that mental exertions should not be subjected to a harder principle of measurement. 3*d*, The demand is, so far as I can learn, totally new and unheard of. 4*th*, Supposing that I died and left my manuscripts to be sold publicly along with the rest of my library, is there any ground for taxing what might be received for the written book, any more than any rare printed book which a speculative bookseller might purchase with a view to re-publication? You will know whether any of these things ought to be suggested in the brief. David Hume, and every lawyer here whom I have spoken to, consider the demand as illegal. Believe me truly yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

Digitized by Google

Mr Richardson having prepared a case, obtained upon it the opinions of Mr Alexander (afterwards Sir William Alexander and Chief Baron of the Exchequer) and of the late Sir Samuel Romilly. These eminent lawyers agreed in the view of their Scotch brethren; and after a tedious correspondence, the Lords of the Treasury at last decided that the Income-Tax Commissioners should abandon their claim upon the produce of literary labour. I have thought it worth while to preserve some record of this decision, and of the authorities on which it rested, in case such a demand should ever be renewed hereafter.

In the beginning of December, the Town-Council of Edinburgh resolved to send a deputation to congratulate the Prince Regent on the prosperous course of public events, and they invited Scott to draw up their address, which, on its being transmitted for previous inspection to Mr William Dundas, then Member for the City, and through him shown privately to the Regent, was acknowledged to the penman, by his Royal Highness's command, as "the most elegant congratulation a sovereign ever received, or a subject offered."* The Lord Provost of Edinburgh presented it accordingly at the levee of

* Letter from the Right Hon. W. Dundas, dated 6th December 1813.

Digitized by Google

the 10th, and it was received most graciously. On returning to the north, the Magistrates expressed their sense of Scott's services on this occasion by presenting him with the freedom of his native city, and also with a piece of plate,—which the reader will find alluded to, among other matters of more consequence, in a letter to be quoted presently.

At this time Scott further expressed his patriotic exultation in the rescue of Europe, by two songs for the anniversary of the death of Pitt; one of which has ever since, I believe, been chaunted at that celebration:—

"O dread was the time and more dreadful the omen,
When the brave on Marengo lay slaughter'd in vain,"* &c.

* See Scott's Poetical Works, vol xi. p. 309. Edition 1834.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVII.

Insanity of Henry Weber — Letters on the Abdication of Napoleon, &c. — Publication of Scott's Life and Edition of Swift — Essays for the Supplement to the Encyclopædia Britannica — Completion and Publication of Waverley.

1814.

I HAVE to open the year 1814 with a melancholy story. Mention has been made, more than once, of Henry Weber, a poor German scholar, who escaping to this country in 1804, from misfortunes in his own, excited Scott's compassion, and was thenceforth furnished, through his means, with literary employment of various sorts. Weber was a man of considerable learning; but Scott, as was his custom, appears to have formed an exaggerated notion of his capacity, and certainly countenanced him, to his own

Digitized by Google

severe cost, in several most unfortunate undertakings. When not engaged on things of a more ambitious character, he had acted for ten years as his protector's amanuensis, and when the family were in Edinburgh, he very often dined with them. There was something very interesting in his appearance and manners: he had a fair, open countenance, in which the honesty and the enthusiasm of his nation were alike visible; his demeanour was gentle and modest; and he had not only a stock of curious antiquarian knowledge, but the reminiscences, which he detailed with amusing simplicity, of an early life chequered with many strange-enough adventures. He was, in short, much a favourite with Scott and all the household; and was invited to dine with them so frequently, chiefly because his friend was aware that he had an unhappy propensity to drinking, and was anxious to keep him away from places where he might have been more likely to indulge it. This vice, however, had been growing on him; and of late Scott had found it necessary to make some rather severe remonstrances about habits which were at once injuring his health, and interrupting his literary industry.

They had, however, parted kindly when Scott left Edinburgh at Christmas 1813, — and the day after his return, Weber attended him as usual in his library, being employed in transcribing extracts during

Digitized by Google

several hours, while his friend, seated over against him, continued working at the Life of Swift. The light beginning to fail, Scott threw himself back in his chair, and was about to ring for candles, when he observed the German's eyes fixed upon him with an unusual solemnity of expression. "Weber," said he, "what's the matter with you?" "Mr Scott," said Weber rising, "you have long insulted me, and I can bear it no longer. I have brought a pair of pistols with me, and must insist on your taking one of them instantly;" and with that he produced the weapons, which had been deposited under his chair, and laid one of them on Scott's manuscript. "You are mistaken, I think," said Scott, "in your way of setting about this affair — but no matter. It can, however, be no part of your object to annoy Mrs Scott and the children; therefore, if you please, we will put the pistols into the drawer till after dinner, and then arrange to go out together like gentlemen." Weber answered with equal coolness, "I believe that will be better," and laid the second pistol also on the table. Scott locked them both in his desk, and said, "I am glad you have felt the propriety of what I suggested—let me only request further, that nothing may occur while we are at dinner to give my wife any suspicion of what has been passing." Weber again assented, and Scott withdrew to his dressing-room, from which he immediately despatched a mes-

Digitized by Google

sage to one of Weber's intimate companions, — and then dinner was served, and Weber joined the family circle as usual. He conducted himself with perfect composure, and everything seemed to go on in the ordinary way, until whisky and hot water being produced, Scott, instead of inviting his guest to help himself, mixed two moderate tumblers of toddy, and handed one of them to Weber, who, upon that, started up with a furious countenance, but instantly sat down again, and when Mrs Scott expressed her fear that he was ill, answered placidly that he was liable to spasms, but that the pain was gone. He then took the glass, eagerly gulped down its contents, and pushed it back to Scott. At this moment the friend who had been sent for made his appearance, and Weber, on seeing him enter the room, rushed past him and out of the house, without stopping to put on his hat. The friend, who pursued instantly, came up with him at the end of the street, and did all he could to soothe his agitation, but in vain. The same evening he was obliged to be put into a strait waistcoat; and though, in a few days, he exhibited such symptoms of recovery that he was allowed to go by himself to pay a visit in the North of England, he there soon relapsed, and continued ever afterwards a hopeless lunatic, being supported to the end of his life, in June 1818, at Scott's expense in an asylum at York.

Digitized by Google

The reader will now appreciate the gentle delicacy of the following letter:—

To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., Rokeby, Greta Bridge.

"Edinburgh, 7th January 1814.

"Many happy New-years to you and Mrs Morritt.

"My Dear Morritt,

"I have postponed writing a long while, in hopes to send you the Life of Swift. But I have been delayed by an odd accident. Poor Weber, whom you may have heard me mention as a sort of grinder of mine, who assisted me in various ways, has fallen into a melancholy state. His habits, like those of most German students, were always too convivial—this, of course, I guarded against while he was in my house, which was always once a-week at least; but unfortunately he undertook a long walk through the Highlands of upwards of 2000 miles, and, I suppose, took potations pottle deep to support him through the fatigue. His mind became accordingly quite unsettled, and after some strange behaviour here, he was fortunately prevailed upon to go to * * * * who resides in Yorkshire. It is not unlikely, from something that dropped from him, that he may take it into his head to call at Rokeby, in which case you must parry any visit, upon the score

Digitized by Google

of Mrs Morritt's health. If he were what he used to be, you would be much pleased with him; for besides a very extensive general acquaintance with literature, he was particularly deep in our old dramatic lore, a good modern linguist, a tolerable draughtsman and antiquary, and a most excellent hydrographer. I have not the least doubt that if he submits to the proper regimen of abstinence and moderate exercise, he will be quite well in a few weeks or days—if not, it is miserable to think what may happen. The being suddenly deprived of his services in this melancholy way, has flung me back at least a month with Swift, and left me no time to write to my friends, for all my memoranda, &c. were in his hands, and had to be new-modelled, &c. &c.

"Our glorious prospects on the Continent called forth the congratulations of the City of Edinburgh among others. The Magistrates asked me to draw their address, which was presented by the Lord Provost in person, who happens to be a gentleman of birth and fortune.* The Prince said some very handsome things respecting the address, with which the Magistrates were so much elated, that they have done the genteel thing (as Winifred Jenkins says) by their literary adviser, and presented me with the freedom of the city, and a handsome piece of plate.

* The late Sir John Marjoribanks of Lees, Bart.

Digitized by Google

I got the freedom at the same time with Lord Dalhousie and Sir Thomas Graham, and the Provost gave a very brilliant entertainment. About 150 gentlemen dined at his own house, all as well served as if there had been a dozen. So if one strikes a cuff on the one side from ill-will, there is a pat on the other from kindness, and the shuttlecock is kept flying. To poor Charlotte's great horror, I chose my plate in the form of an old English tankard, an utensil for which I have a particular respect, especially when charged with good ale, cup, or any of these potables. I hope you will soon see mine.*

"Your little friends, Sophia and Walter, were at a magnificent party on Twelfth Night at Dalkeith, where the Duke and Duchess entertained all Edinburgh. I think they have dreamed of nothing since

* The inscription for this tankard was penned by the late celebrated Dr. James Gregory, Professor of the Practice of Physic in the University of Edinburgh; and I therefore transcribe it.

GUALTERUM SCOTT
DE ABBOTSFORD
VIRUM SUMMI INGENII
SCRIPTOREM ELEGANTEM
POETARUM SUI SECULI FACILE PRINCIPEM
PATRIÆ DECUS
OB VARIA ERGA IPSAM MERITA
IN CIVIUM SUORUM NUMERUM
GRATA ADSCRIPSIT CIVITAS EDINBURGENSIS
ET HOC CANTHARO DONAVIT
A. D. M.DCCC.XIII.

Digitized by Google

but Aladdin's lamp and the palace of Haroun Alraschid. I am uncertain what to do this spring. I would fain go on the continent for three or four weeks, if it be then safe for non-combatants. If not, we will have a merry meeting in London, and, like Master Silence,

> 'Eat, drink, and make good cheer,
> And praise heaven for the merry year.' *

I have much to say about Triermain. The fourth edition is at press. The Empress-Dowager of Russia has expressed such an interest in it, that it will be inscribed to her, in some doggrel sonnet or other, by the unknown author. This is funny enough.—Love a thousand times to dear Mrs Morritt, who, I trust, keeps pretty well. Pray write soon—a modest request from WALTER SCOTT."

The last of Weber's literary productions were the analyses of the Old German Poems of the *Helden Buch*, and the *Nibelungen Lied*, which appeared in a massive quarto, entitled Illustrations of Northern Antiquities, published in the summer of 1814, by his and Scott's friend, Mr Robert Jameson. Scott avowedly contributed to this collection an account of the Eyrbiggia Saga, which has since been included in his Prose Miscellanies (Vol. V., edition 1834); but

* 2d *King Henry IV. Act V. Scene* 3.

Digitized by Google

any one who examines the share of the work which goes under Weber's name, will see that Scott had a considerable hand in that also. The rhymed versions from the Nibelungen Lied came, I can have no doubt from his pen; but he never reclaimed these, or any other similar benefactions, of which I have traced not a few; nor, highly curious and even beautiful as many of them are, could they be intelligible, if separated from the prose narrative on which Weber embroidered them, in imitation of the style of Ellis's Specimens of Metrical Romance.

The following letters, on the first abdication of Napoleon, are too characteristic to be omitted here. I need not remind the reader how greatly Scott had calmed his opinions, and softened his feelings, respecting the career and fate of the most extraordinary man of our age, before he undertook to write his history.

"*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., Portland Place, London.*

"Abbotsford, 30th April 1814.

"'Joy—joy in London now!'—and in Edinburgh, moreover, my dear Morritt; for never did you or I see, and never again shall we see, according to all human prospects, a consummation so truly glorious, as now bids fair to conclude this long and eventful war. It is startling to think that, but for

Digitized by Google

the preternatural presumption and hardness of heart displayed by the arch-enemy of mankind, we should have had a hollow and ominous truce with him, instead of a glorious and stable peace with the country over which he tyrannized, and its lawful ruler. But Providence had its own wise purposes to answer — and such was the deference of France to the ruling power — so devoutly did they worship the Devil for possession of his burning throne, that, it may be, nothing short of his rejection of every fair and advantageous offer of peace could have driven them to those acts of resistance which remembrance of former convulsions had rendered so fearful to them. Thank God! it is done at last: and — although I rather grudge him even the mouthful of air which he may draw in the Isle of Elba — yet I question whether the moral lesson would have been completed either by his perishing in battle, or being torn to pieces (which I should greatly have preferred), like the De Witts, by an infuriated crowd of conscripts and their parents. Good God! with what strange feelings must that man retire from the most unbounded authority ever vested in the hands of one man, to the seclusion of privacy and restraint! We have never heard of one good action which he did, at least for which there was not some selfish or political reason; and the train of slaughter, pestilence, and famine and fire, which his ambition has occasioned, would have outweighed five

Digitized by Google

hundredfold the private virtues of a Titus. These are comfortable reflections to carry with one to privacy. If he writes his own history, as he proposes, we may gain something; but he must send it here to be printed. Nothing less than a neck-or-nothing London bookseller, like John Dunton of yore, will venture to commit to the press his strange details uncastrated. I doubt if he has *stamina* to undertake such a labour; and yet, in youth, as I know from the brothers of Lauriston, who were his school-companions, Buonaparte's habits were distinctly and strongly literary. Spain, the Continental System, and the invasion of Russia he may record as his three leading blunders—an awful lesson to sovereigns that morality is not so indifferent to politics as Machiavelians will assert. *Res nolunt diu male administrari.* Why can we not meet to talk over these matters over a glass of claret? and when shall that be? Not this spring, I fear, for time wears fast away, and I have remained here nailed among my future oaks, which I measure daily with a foot-rule. Those which were planted two years ago, begin to look very gaily, and a venerable plantation of four years old looks as *bobbish* as yours at the dairy by Greta side. Besides, I am arranging this cottage a little more conveniently, to put off the plague and expense of building another year; and I assure you, I expect to spare Mrs Morritt and you a chamber in the wall, with a dressing-room

Digitized by Google

and everything handsome about you. You will not stipulate, of course, for many square feet. You would be surprised to hear how the Continent is awakening from its iron sleep. The utmost eagerness seems to prevail about English literature. I have had several voluntary epistles from different parts of Germany, from men of letters, who are eager to know what we have been doing, while they were compelled to play at blind man's buff with the *ci-devant Empereur*. The feeling of the French officers, of whom we have many in our vicinity, is very curious, and yet natural.* Many of them, companions of Buonaparte's victories, and who hitherto have marched with him from conquest to conquest, disbelieve the change entirely. This is all very stupid to write to you, who are in the centre of these wonders; but what else can I say, unless I should send you the measure of the future fathers of the forest? Mrs Scott is with me here—the children in Edinburgh. Our kindest love attends Mrs Morritt. I hope to hear soon that her health continues to gain ground.

"I have a letter from Southey, in high spirits on the glorious news. What a pity this last battle† was

* A good many French officers, prisoners of war, had been living on *parole* in Melrose, and the adjoining villages; and Mr and Mrs Scott had been particularly kind and hospitable to them.

† The battle of Thoulouse.

Digitized by Google

fought. But I am glad the rascals were beaten once more. Ever yours, WALTER SCOTT."

"*To Robert Southey, Esq., Keswick.*

"Edinburgh, 17th June 1814.

"My Dear Southey,

"I suspended writing to thank you for the Carmen Triumphale—(a happy omen of what you can do to immortalize our public story)—until the feverish mood of expectation and anxiety should be over. And then, as you truly say, there followed a stunning sort of listless astonishment and complication of feeling, which if it did not lessen enjoyment, confused and confounded one's sense of it. I remember the first time I happened to see a launch, I was neither so much struck with the descent of the vessel, nor with its majestic sweep to its moorings, as with the blank which was suddenly made from the withdrawing so large an object, and the prospect which was at once opened to the opposite side of the dock crowded with spectators. Buonaparte's fall strikes me something in the same way: the huge bulk of his power, against which a thousand arms were hammering, was obviously to sink when its main props were struck away—and yet now—when it has disappeared—the vacancy which it leaves in our minds and attention, marks its huge and prepon-

Digitized by Google

derating importance more strongly than even its presence. Yet I so devoutly expected the termination, that in discussing the matter with Major Philips, who seemed to partake of the doubts which prevailed during the feverish period preceding the capture of Paris, when he was expressing his apprehensions that the capital of France would be defended to the last, I hazarded a prophecy that a battle would be fought on the heights of Mont Martre—(no great sagacity, since it was the point where Marlborough proposed to attack, and for which Saxe projected a scheme of defence)—and that if the allies were successful, which I little doubted, the city would surrender, and the Senate proclaim the dethronement of Buonaparte. But I never thought nor imagined that he would have *given in* as he has done. I always considered him as possessing the genius and talents of an Eastern conqueror; and although I never supposed that he possessed, allowing for some difference of education, the liberality of conduct and political views which were sometimes exhibited by old Hyder Ally, yet I did think he might have shown the same resolved and dogged spirit of resolution which induced Tippoo Saib to die manfully upon the breach of his capital city with his sabre clenched in his hand. But this is a poor devil, and cannot play the tyrant so rarely as Bottom the Weaver proposed to do. I think it is Strap in Ro-

Digitized by Google

derick Random, who seeing a highwayman that had lately robbed him, disarmed and bound, fairly offers to box him for a shilling. One has really the same feeling with respect to Buonaparte, though if he go out of life after all in the usual manner, it will be the strongest proof of his own insignificance, and the liberality of the age we live in. Were I a son of Palm or Hoffer, I should be tempted to take a long shot at him in his retreat to Elba. As for coaxing the French by restoring all our conquests, it would be driving generosity into extravagance: most of them have been colonized with British subjects, and improved by British capital; and surely we owe no more to the French nation than any well-meaning individual might owe to a madman, whom—at the expense of a hard struggle, black eyes, and bruises—he has at length overpowered, knocked down, and by the wholesome discipline of a bull's pizzle and strait jacket, brought to the handsome enjoyment of his senses. I think with you, what we return to them should be well paid for; and they should have no Pondicherry to be a nest of smugglers, nor Mauritius to nurse a hornet-swarm of privateers. In short, draw teeth, and pare claws, and leave them to fatten themselves in peace and quiet, when they are deprived of the means of indulging their restless spirit of enterprise.

"—— The above was written at Abbotsford last

Digitized by Google

month, but left in my portfolio there till my return some days ago; and now, when I look over what I have written, I am confirmed in my opinion that we have given the rascals too good an opportunity to boast that they have got well off. An intimate friend of mine,* just returned from a long captivity in France, witnessed the entry of the King, guarded by the Imperial Guards, whose countenances betokened the most sullen and ferocious discontent. The mob, and especially the women, pelted them for refusing to cry 'Vive le Roi.' If Louis is well advised, he will get rid of these fellows gradually, but as soon as possible. 'Joy, joy in London now!' What a scene has been going on there! I think you may see the Czar appear on the top of one of your stages one morning. He is a fine fellow, and has fought the good fight. Yours affectionately,

WALTER SCOTT."

On the 1st of July 1814, Scott's Life and Edition of Swift, in nineteen volumes 8vo, at length issued from the press. This adventure, undertaken by Constable in 1808, had been proceeded in during all the variety of their personal relations, and now came forth when author and publisher felt more warmly towards each other than perhaps they had

* Sir Adam Fergusson, who had been taken prisoner in the course of the Duke of Wellington's retreat from Burgos.

Digitized by Google

ever before done. The impression was of 1250 copies; and a reprint of similar extent was called for in 1824. The Life of Swift has subsequently been included in the author's Miscellanies, and has obtained a very wide circulation.

By his industrious enquiries, in which, as the preface gratefully acknowledges, he found many zealous assistants, especially among the Irish literati,* Scott added to this edition many admirable pieces, both in prose and verse, which had never before been printed, and still more which had escaped notice amidst old bundles of pamphlets and broadsides. To the illustration of these and of all the better known writings of the Dean, he brought the same qualifications which had, by general consent, distinguished his Dryden, "uniting," as the Edinburgh Review expresses it, "to the minute knowledge and patient research of the Malones and Chalmerses, a vigour of judgment and a vivacity of style to which they had no pretensions." His biographical narrative, introductory essays, and notes on Swift, show, indeed, an intimacy of acquaintance with the obscurest details of the political, social, and literary history of the period of Queen Anne, which it is

* The names which he particularly mentions, are those of the late Matthew Weld Hartstonge, Esq., of Dublin, Theophilus Swift, Esq., Major Tickell, Thomas Steele, Esq., Leonard Macnally, Esq., and the Rev. M. Berwick.

Digitized by Google

impossible to consider without feeling a lively regret that he never accomplished a long-cherished purpose of preparing a Life and Edition of Pope on a similar scale. It has been specially unfortunate for that "true deacon of the craft," as Scott often called Pope, that first Goldsmith, and then Scott, should have taken up, only to abandon it, the project of writing his life and editing his works.

The Edinburgh Reviewer thus characterises Scott's Memoir of the Dean of St Patrick's: —

"It is not everywhere extremely well written, in a literary point of view, but it is drawn up in substance with great intelligence, liberality, and good feeling. It is quite fair and moderate in politics; and perhaps rather too indulgent and tender towards individuals of all descriptions — more full, at least, of kindness and veneration for genius and social virtue, than of indignation at baseness and profligacy. Altogether, it is not much like the production of a mere man of letters, or a fastidious speculator in sentiment and morality; but exhibits throughout, and in a very pleasing form, the good sense and large toleration of a man of the world, with much of that generous allowance for the

'Fears of the brave and follies of the wise,'

which genius too often requires, and should therefore always be most forward to show. It is impossible, however, to avoid noticing that Mr Scott is by far too favourable to the personal character of his author, whom we think it would really be injurious to the cause of morality to allow to pass either as a very dignified, or a very amiable person. The truth is, we think, that he was extremely ambitious, arrogant, and selfish; of a morose, vindictive, and haughty temper; and though capable of a sort of patro-

Digitized by Google

nising generosity towards his dependents, and of some attachment towards those who had long known and flattered him, his general demeanour, both in public and private life, appears to have been far from exemplary; destitute of temper and magnanimity, and we will add, of principle, in the former; and in the latter, of tenderness, fidelity, or compassion."—*Edinburgh Review*, vol. xvii. p. 9.

I have no desire to break a lance in this place in defence of the personal character of Swift. It does not appear to me that he stands at all distinguished among politicians (least of all, among the politicians of his time) for laxity of principle; nor can I consent to charge his private demeanour with the absence either of tenderness, or fidelity, or compassion. But who ever dreamed — most assuredly not Scott — of holding up the Dean of St Patrick's as on the whole an "exemplary character?" The biographer felt, whatever his critic may have thought on the subject, that a vein of morbid humour ran through Swift's whole existence, both mental and physical, from the beginning. "He early adopted," says Scott, "the custom of observing his birthday, as a term not of joy but of sorrow, and of reading, when it annually recurred, the striking passage of Scripture in which Job laments and execrates the day upon which it was said in his father's house *that a man-child was born;*" and I should have expected that any man who had considered the black close of

Digitized by Google

the career thus early clouded, and read the entry of Swift's diary on the funeral of Stella, his epitaph on himself, and the testament by which he disposed of his fortune, would have been willing, like Scott, to dwell on the splendour of his immortal genius, and the many traits of manly generosity "which he unquestionably exhibited," rather than on the faults and foibles of nameless and inscrutable disease, which tormented and embittered the far greater part of his earthly being. What the critic says of the practical and business-like style of Scott's biography, appears very just — and I think the circumstance eminently characteristic — nor, on the whole, could his edition, as an edition, have been better dealt with than in the Essay which I have quoted. It was, by the way, written by Mr Jeffrey, at Constable's particular request. "It was, I think, the first time I ever asked such a thing of him," the bookseller said to me; "and I assure you the result was no encouragement to repeat such petitions." Mr Jeffrey attacked Swift's whole character at great length, and with consummate dexterity; and, in Constable's opinion, his article threw such a cloud on the Dean, as materially checked, for a time, the popularity of his writings. Admirable as the paper is, in point of ability, I think Mr Constable may have considerably exaggerated its effects; but in those days it must have been difficult for him to form an impartial

Digitized by Google

opinion upon such a question; for, as Johnson said of Cave, that "he could not spit over his window without thinking of The Gentleman's Magazine," I believe Constable allowed nothing to interrupt his paternal pride in the concerns of his Review, until the Waverley Novels supplied him with another periodical publication still more important to his fortunes.

And this consummation was not long delayed: a considerable addition having by that time been made to the original fragment, there appeared in The Scot's Magazine, for February 1st, 1814, an announcement, that "Waverley; or, 'tis Sixty Years Since, a novel, in 3 vols. 12mo," would be published in March. And before Scott came into Edinburgh, at the close of the Christmas vacation, on the 12th of January, Mr Erskine had perused the greater part of the first volume, and expressed his decided opinion that Waverley would prove the most popular of all his friend's writings.* The MS. was forth-

* Entertaining one night a small party of friends, Erskine read the proof sheets of this volume after supper, and was confirmed in his opinion by the enthusiastic interest they excited in his highly intelligent circle. Mr James Simpson and Mr Norman Hill, advocates, were of this party, and from the way in which their host spoke, they both inferred that they were listening to the first effort of some unknown aspirant. They all pronounced the work one of the highest classical merit. The sitting was protracted till daybreak. — [1839.]

Digitized by Google

with copied by John Ballantyne, and sent to press. As soon as a volume was printed, Ballantyne conveyed it to Constable, who did not for a moment doubt from what pen it proceeded, but took a few days to consider of the matter, and then offered £700 for the copyright. When we recollect what the state of novel literature in those days was, and that the only exceptions to its mediocrity, the Irish Tales of Miss Edgeworth, however appreciated in refined circles, had a circulation so limited that she had never realized a tithe of £700 by the best of them—it must be allowed that Constable's offer was a liberal one. Scott's answer, however, transmitted through the same channel, was, that £700 was too much, in case the novel should not be successful, and too little in case it should. He added, "If our fat friend had said £1000, I should have been staggered." John did not forget to hint this last circumstance to Constable, but the latter did not choose to act upon it; and he ultimately published the work, on the footing of an equal division of profits between himself and the author. There was a considerable pause between the finishing of the first volume and the beginning of the second. Constable had, in 1812, acquired the copyright of the Encyclopædia Britannica, and was now preparing to publish the valuable *Supplement* to that work, which has since, with modifications, been incorporated into

Digitized by Google

its text. He earnestly requested Scott to undertake a few articles for the Supplement; he agreed —and, anxious to gratify the generous bookseller, at once laid aside his tale until he had finished two essays—those on Chivalry and the Drama. They appear to have been completed in the course of April and May, and he received for each of them —(as he did subsequently for that on Romance)— £100.

The two next letters will give us, in more exact detail than the author's own recollection could supply in 1830, the history of the completion of Waverley. It was published on the 7th of July; and two days afterwards he thus writes:—

"*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., M. P., London.*

"Edinburgh, 9th July 1814.

"My Dear Morritt,

"I owe you many apologies for not sooner answering your very entertaining letter upon your Parisian journey. I heartily wish I had been of your party, for you have seen what I trust will not be seen again in a hurry; since, to enjoy the delight of a restoration, there is a necessity for a previous *bouleversement* of everything that is valuable in morals and policy, which seems to have been the case

Digitized by Google

in France since 1790.* The Duke of Buccleuch told me yesterday of a very good reply of Louis to some of his attendants, who proposed shutting the doors of his apartments to keep out the throng of people. 'Open the door,' he said, 'to John Bull; he has suffered a great deal in keeping the door open for me.'

"Now, to go from one important subject to another, I must account for my own laziness, which I do by referring you to a small anonymous sort of a novel, in three volumes, Waverley, which you will receive by the mail of this day. It was a very old attempt of mine to embody some traits of those characters and manners peculiar to Scotland, the last remnants of which vanished during my own youth, so that few or no traces now remain. I had written great part of the first volume, and sketched other passages, when I mislaid the MS., and only found it by the merest accident as I was rummaging the drawers of an old cabinet; and I took the fancy of finishing it, which I did so fast, that the last two volumes were written in three weeks. I had a great deal of fun in the accomplishment of this task, though I do not expect that it will be popular in the south,

* Mr. Morritt had, in the spring of this year, been present at the first levee held at the Tuileries by Monsieur, (afterwards Charles X.), as representative of his brother Louis XVIII. Mr M. had not been in Paris till that time since 1789.

Digitized by Google

as much of the humour, if there be any, is local, and some of it even professional. You, however, who are an adopted Scotchman, will find some amusement in it. It has made a very strong impression here, and the good people of Edinburgh are busied in tracing the author, and in finding out originals for the portraits it contains. In the first case, they will probably find it difficult to convict the guilty author, although he is far from escaping suspicion. Jeffrey has offered to make oath that it is mine, and another great critic has tendered his affidavit *ex contrario;* so that these authorities have divided the Gude Town. However, the thing has succeeded very well, and is thought highly of. I don't know if it has got to London yet. I intend to maintain my *incognito.* Let me know your opinion about it. I should be most happy if I could think it would amuse a painful thought at this anxious moment. I was in hopes Mrs Morritt was getting so much better, that this relapse affects me very much. Ever yours truly,

W. SCOTT.

"P. S. — As your conscience has very few things to answer for, you must still burthen it with the secret of the Bridal. It is spreading very rapidly, and I have one or two little fairy romances, which will make a second volume, and which I would wish published, but not with my name. The truth is,

Digitized by Google

that this sort of muddling work amuses me, and I am something in the condition of Joseph Surface, who was embarrassed by getting himself too good a reputation; for many things may please people well enough anonymously, which, if they have me in the title-page, would just give me that sort of ill name which precedes hanging — and that would be in many respects inconvenient if I thought of again trying a *grande opus.*"

This statement of the foregoing letter (repeated still more precisely in the following one), as to the time occupied in the composition of the second and third volumes of Waverley, recalls to my memory a trifling anecdote, which, as connected with a dear friend of my youth, whom I have not seen for many years, and may very probably never see again in this world, I shall here set down, in the hope of affording him a momentary, though not an unmixed pleasure, when he may chance to read this compilation on a distant shore — and also in the hope that my humble record may impart to some active mind in the rising generation a shadow of the influence which the reality certainly exerted upon his. Happening to pass through Edinburgh in June 1814, I dined one day with the gentleman in question (now the Honourable William Menzies, one of the Supreme Judges at the Cape of Good Hope), whose residence was then in George Street, situated very near to, and at right

Digitized by Google

angles with, North Castle Street. It was a party of very young persons, most of them, like Menzies and myself, destined for the Bar of Scotland, all gay and thoughtless, enjoying the first flush of manhood, with little remembrance of the yesterday, or care of the morrow. When my companion's worthy father and uncle, after seeing two or three bottles go round, left the juveniles to themselves, the weather being hot, we adjourned to a library which had one large window looking northwards. After carousing here for an hour or more, I observed that a shade had come over the aspect of my friend, who happened to be placed immediately opposite to myself, and said something that intimated a fear of his being unwell. "No," said he, "I shall be well enough presently, if you will only let me sit where you are, and take my chair; for there is a confounded hand in sight of me here, which has often bothered me before, and now it won't let me fill my glass with a good will." I rose to change places with him accordingly, and he pointed out to me this hand which, like the writing on Belshazzar's wall, disturbed his hour of hilarity. "Since we sat down," he said, "I have been watching it — it fascinates my eye — it never stops — page after page is finished and thrown on that heap of MS., and still it goes on unwearied — and so it will be till candles are brought in, and God knows how long after that. It is the same every night — I can't stand a sight of it when I am not

Digitized by Google

at my books." — "Some stupid, dogged, engrossing clerk, probably," exclaimed myself, or some other giddy youth in our society. "No, boys," said our host, "I well know what hand it is — 'tis Walter Scott's." This was the hand that, in the evenings of three summer weeks, wrote the two last volumes of Waverley. Would that all who that night watched it, had profited by its example of diligence as largely as William Menzies!

In the next of these letters Scott enclosed to Mr Morritt the Prospectus of a new edition of the old poems of the Bruce and the Wallace, undertaken by the learned lexicographer, Dr John Jamieson; and he announces his departure on a sailing excursion round the north of Scotland. It will be observed, that when Scott began his letter, he had only had Mr Morritt's opinion of the first volume of Waverley, and that before he closed it, he had received his friend's honest criticism on the work as a whole, with the expression of an earnest hope that he would drop his *incognito* on the titlepage of a second edition.

"*J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., M.P., Portland Place. London.*

"Abbotsford, July 24, 1814.

"My Dear Morritt,

"I am going to say my *vales* to you for some

Digitized by Google

weeks, having accepted an invitation from a committee of the Commissioners for the Northern Lights (I don't mean the Edinburgh Reviewers, but the *bonâ fide* Commissioners for the Beacons), to accompany them upon a nautical tour round Scotland, visiting all that is curious on continent and isle. The party are three gentlemen with whom I am very well acquainted, William Erskine being one. We have a stout cutter, well fitted up and manned for the service by Government; and to make assurance double sure, the admiral has sent a sloop of war to cruise in the dangerous points of our tour, and sweep the sea of the Yankee privateers, which sometimes annoy our northern latitudes. I shall visit the Clephanes in their solitude — and let you know all that I see that is rare and entertaining, which, as we are masters of our time and vessel, should add much to my stock of knowledge.

"As to Waverley, I will play Sir Fretful for once, and assure you that I left the story to flag in the first volume on purpose; the second and third have rather more bustle and interest. I wished (with what success Heaven knows) to avoid the ordinary error of novel writers, whose first volume is usually their best. But since it has served to amuse Mrs Morritt and you *usque ab initio*, I have no doubt you will tolerate it even unto the end. It may really boast to be a tolerably faithful portrait of Scottish manners, and has been recognised as such in Edinburgh. The

Digitized by Google

first edition of a thousand instantly disappeared, and the bookseller informs me that the second, of double the quantity, will not supply the market long. — As I shall be very anxious to know how Mrs Morritt is, I hope to have a few lines from you on my return, which will be about the end of August or beginning of September. I should have mentioned that we have the celebrated engineer, Stevenson, along with us. I delight in these professional men of talent; they always give you some new lights by the peculiarity of their habits and studies, so different from the people who are rounded, and smoothed, and ground down for conversation, and who can say all that every other person says, and—nothing more.

"What a miserable thing it is that our royal family cannot be quiet and decent at least, if not correct and moral in their deportment. Old farmer George's manly simplicity, modesty of expense, and domestic virtue, saved this country at its most perilous crisis; for it is inconceivable the number of persons whom these qualities united in his behalf, who would have felt but feebly the abstract duty of supporting a crown less worthily worn.

"— I had just proceeded thus far when your kind favour of the 21st reached Abbotsford. I am heartily glad you continued to like Waverley to the end. The hero is a sneaking piece of imbecility; and if he had married Flora, she would have set him up upon the

Digitized by Google

chimneypiece, as Count Borowlaski's wife used to do with him.* I am a bad hand at depicting a hero properly so called, and have an unfortunate propensity for the dubious characters of borderers, buccaneers, Highland robbers, and all others of a Robin-Hood description. I do not know why it should be, as I am myself, like Hamlet, indifferent honest; but I suppose the blood of the old cattle-drivers of Teviotdale continues to stir in my veins.

"I shall *not* own Waverley; my chief reason is, that it would prevent me of the pleasure of writing again. David Hume, nephew of the historian, says the author must be of a jacobite family and predilections, a yeoman-cavalry man, and a Scottish lawyer, and desires me to guess in whom these happy attri-

* *Count Borowlaski* was a Polish dwarf, who, after realizing some money as an itinerant object of exhibition, settled, married, and died (Sept. 5, 1837) at Durham. He was a well-bred creature, and much noticed by the clergy and other gentry of that city. Indeed, even when travelling the country as a show, he had always maintained a sort of dignity. I remember him as going from house to house, when I was a child, in a sedan chair, with a servant in livery following him, who took the fee — *M. le Comte* himself (dressed in a scarlet coat and bag wig) being ushered into the room like any ordinary visitor.

The Count died in his 99th year —

"A SPIRIT brave, yet gentle, has dwelt, as it appears,
Within three feet of flesh for near one hundred years,
Which causes wonder, like his constitution, strong,
That one *so short alive* should be *alive so long!*"
Bentley's Miscellany for November 1837

Digitized by Google

butes are united. I shall not plead guilty, however; and as such seems to be the fashion of the day, I hope charitable people will believe my *affidavit* in contradiction to all other evidence. The Edinburgh faith now is, that Waverley is written by Jeffrey, having been composed to lighten the tedium of his late transatlantic voyage. So you see the unknown infant is like to come to preferment. In truth, I am not sure it would be considered quite decorous for me as a Clerk of Session, to write novels. Judges being monks, Clerks are a sort of lay brethren, from whom some solemnity of walk and conduct may be expected. So, whatever I may do of this kind, 'I shall whistle it down the wind, and let it prey at fortune.'* I will take care, in the next edition, to make the corrections you recommend. The second is, I believe, nearly through the press. It will hardly be printed faster than it was written; for though the first volume was begun long ago, and actually lost for a time, yet the other two were begun and finished between the 4th June and the 1st July, during all which I attended my duty in Court, and proceeded without loss of time or hinderance of business.

"I wish, for poor auld Scotland's sake,† and for the manes of Bruce and Wallace, and for the living

* *Othello, Act III. Scene* 3.

† Burns — lines "On my early days."

Digitized by Google

comfort of a very worthy and ingenious dissenting clergyman, who has collected a library and medals of some value, and brought up, I believe, sixteen or seventeen children (his wife's ambition extended to twenty) upon about £150 a-year — I say I wish, for all these reasons, you could get me among your wealthy friends a name or two for the enclosed proposals. The price is, I think, too high; but the booksellers fixed it two guineas above what I proposed. I trust it will be yet lowered to five guineas, which is a more come-at-able sum than six. The poems themselves are great curiosities, both to the philologist and antiquary; and that of Bruce is invaluable even to the historian. They have been hitherto wretchedly edited.

"I am glad you are not to pay for this scrawl. Ever yours, WALTER SCOTT.

"P. S.—I do not see how my silence can be considered as imposing on the public. If I give my name to a book without writing it, unquestionably that would be a trick. But, unless in the case of his averring facts which he may be called upon to defend or justify, I think an author may use his own discretion in giving or withholding his name. Harry Mackenzie never put his name in a titlepage till the last edition of his works; and Swift only owned one out of his thousand and one publications. In point of

Digitized by Google

emolument, everybody knows that I sacrifice much money by withholding my name; and what should I gain by it, that any human being has a right to consider as an unfair advantage? In fact, only the freedom of writing trifles with less personal responsibility, and perhaps more frequently than I otherwise might do. W. S."

I am not able to give the exact date of the following reply to one of John Ballantyne's expostulations on the subject of *the secret*:—

"No, John, I will not own the book—
I won't, you Piccaroon.
When next I try St. Grubby's brook,
The A. of Wa— shall bait the hook—
And flat-fish bite as soon,
As if before them they had got
The worn-out wriggler

WALTER SCOTT."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Voyage to the Shetland Isles, &c. — Scott's Diary kept on board the Lighthouse Yacht.

JULY AND AUGUST 1814.

THE gallant composure with which Scott, when he had dismissed a work from his desk, awaited the decision of the public—and the healthy elasticity of spirit with which he could meanwhile turn his whole zeal upon new or different objects—are among the features in his character which will always, I believe, strike the student of literary history as most remarkable. We have now seen him before the fate of Waverley had been determined—before he had heard a word about its reception in England, except from one partial confidant—preparing to start on a voyage to the northern isles, which was likely to occupy the best part of two months, and in the course of which he could hardly expect to receive any intel-

Digitized by Google

ligence from his friends in Edinburgh. The diary which he kept during this expedition, is—thanks to the leisure of a landsman on board—a very full one; and, written without the least notion probably that it would ever be perused except in his own family circle, it affords such a complete and artless portraiture of the man, as he was in himself, and as he mingled with his friends and companions, at one of the most interesting periods of his life, that I am persuaded every reader will be pleased to see it printed in its original state. A few extracts from it were published by himself, in one of the Edinburgh Annual Registers—he also drew from it some of the notes to his Lord of the Isles, and the substance of several others for his romance of the Pirate. But the recurrence of these detached passages will not be complained of—expounded and illustrated as the reader will find them by the personal details of the context.

I have been often told by one of the companions of this voyage, that heartily as Scott entered throughout into their social enjoyments, they all perceived him, when inspecting for the first time scenes of remarkable grandeur, to be in such an abstracted and excited mood, that they felt it would be the kindest and discreetest plan to leave him to himself. "I often," said Lord Kinnedder, "on coming up from the cabin at night, found him pacing the deck ra-

Digitized by Google

pidly, muttering to himself—and went to the forecastle, lest my presence should disturb him. I remember, that at Loch Corriskin, in particular, he seemed quite overwhelmed with his feelings; and we all saw it, and retiring unnoticed, left him to roam and gaze about by himself, until it was time to muster the party and be gone." Scott used to mention the surprise with which he himself witnessed Erskine's emotion on first entering the Cave of Staffa—"Would you believe it?" he said—"my poor Willie sat down and wept like a woman!" Yet his own sensibilities, though betrayed in a more masculine and sterner guise, were perhaps as keen as well as deeper than his amiable friend's.

The poet's Diary, contained in five little paper-books, is as follows:—

"VACATION, 1814.

"*Voyage in the Lighthouse Yacht to Nova Zembla, and the Lord knows where.*

"*July 29th*, 1814.—Sailed from Leith about one o'clock on board the Lighthouse Yacht, conveying six guns, and ten men, commanded by Mr Wilson. The company—Commissioners of the Northern Lights; Robert Hamilton, Sheriff of Lanarkshire;

Digitized by Google

William Erskine, Sheriff of Orkney and Zetland; Adam Duff, Sheriff of Forfarshire. Non-commissioners—Ipse Ego; Mr David Marjoribanks, son to John Marjoribanks, Provost of Edinburgh, a young gentleman; Rev. Mr Turnbull, minister of Tingwall, in the presbytery of Shetland. But the official chief of the expedition is Mr Stevenson, the Surveyor-Viceroy over the Commissioners—a most gentleman-like and modest man, and well known by his scientific skill.

"Reached the Isle of May in the evening; went ashore, and saw the light—an old tower, and much in the form of a border-keep, with a beacon-grate on the top. It is to be abolished for an oil revolving-light, the grate-fire only being ignited upon the leeward side when the wind is very high. *Quære*—Might not the grate revolve? The isle had once a cell or two upon it. The vestiges of the chapel are still visible. Mr Stevenson proposed demolishing the old tower, and I recommended *ruining* it *à la picturesque*—*i. e.* demolishing it partially. The island might be made a delightful residence for sea-bathers.

"On board again in the evening: watched the progress of the ship round Fifeness, and the revolving motion of the now distant Bell-Rock light until the wind grew rough, and the landsmen sick. To bed at eleven, and slept sound.

Digitized by Google

"30*th July*.—Waked at six by the steward: summoned to visit the Bell-Rock, where the beacon is well worthy attention. Its dimensions are well known; but no description can give the idea of this slight, solitary, round tower, trembling amid the billows, and fifteen miles from Arbroath, the nearest shore. The fitting up within is not only handsome, but elegant. All work of wood (almost) is wainscot; all hammer-work brass; in short, exquisitely fitted up. You enter by a ladder of rope, with wooden steps, about thirty feet from the bottom, where the masonwork ceases to be solid, and admits of round apartments. The lowest is a storehouse for the people's provisions, water, &c.; above that a storehouse for the lights, of oil, &c.; then the kitchen of the people, three in number; then their sleeping chamber; then the saloon or parlour, a neat little room; above all, the lighthouse; all communicating by oaken ladders, with brass rails, most handsomely and conveniently executed. Breakfasted in the parlour.* On board

* On being requested, while at breakfast, to inscribe his name in the album of the tower, Scott penned immediately the following lines: —

"PHAROS LOQUITUR.

"Far in the bosom of the deep,
O'er these wild shelves my watch I keep;
A ruddy gem of changeful light,
Bound on the dusky brow of night,
The seaman bids my lustre hail,
And scorns to strike his timorous sail."

Digitized by Google

again at nine, and run down, through a rough sea, to Aberbrothock, vulgarly called Arbroath. All sick, even Mr Stevenson. God grant this occur seldom! Landed and dined at Arbroath, where we were to take up Adam Duff. We visited the appointments of the lighthouse establishment—a handsome tower, with two wings. These contain the lodgings of the keepers of the light—very handsome, indeed, and very clean. They might be thought too handsome, were it not of consequence to give those men, intrusted with a duty so laborious and slavish, a consequence in the eyes of the public and in their own. The central part of the building forms a single tower, corresponding with the lighthouse. As the keepers' families live here, they are apprised each morning by a signal that *all is well.* If this signal be not made, a tender sails for the rock directly. I visited the abbey church for the third time, the first being—*eheu!**—the second with T. Thomson. Dined at Arbroath, and came on board at night, where I made up this foolish journal, and now beg for wine and water. So the vessel is once more in motion.

"31*st July.*—Waked at seven; vessel off Fowlsheugh and Dunnottar. Fair wind, and delightful day; glide enchantingly along the coast of Kincardineshire, and open the bay of Nigg about ten. At

* This is, without doubt, an allusion to some happy day's excursion when his *first love* was of the party.

Digitized by Google

eleven, off Aberdeen; the gentlemen go ashore to Girdle-Ness, a projecting point of rock to the east of the harbour of Fort-Dee. There the magistrates of Aberdeen wish to have a fort and beacon-light. The Oscar, whaler, was lost here last year, with all her hands, excepting two; about forty perished. Dreadful, to be wrecked so near a large and populous town! The view of Old and New Aberdeen from the sea is quite beautiful. About noon, proceed along the coast of Aberdeenshire, which, to the northwards, changes from a bold and rocky to a low and sandy character. Along the bay of Belhelvie, a whole parish was swallowed up by the shifting sands, and is still a desolate waste. It belonged to the Earls of Errol, and was rented at £500 a-year at the time. When these sands are past, the land is all arable. Not a tree to be seen; nor a grazing cow, or sheep, or even a labour-horse at grass, though this be Sunday. The next remarkable object was a fragment of the old castle of Slains, on a precipitous bank, overlooking the sea. The fortress was destroyed when James VI. marched north [A. D. 1594], after the battle of Glenlivat, to reduce Huntly and Errol to obedience. The family then removed to their present mean habitation, for such it seems, a collection of low houses forming a quadrangle, one side of which is built on the very verge of the precipice that overhangs the ocean. What seems odd, there are no

Digitized by Google

stairs down to the beach. Imprudence, or ill fortune as fatal as the sands of Belhelvie, has swallowed up the estate of Errol, excepting this dreary mansion-house, and a farm or two adjoining. We took to the boat, and running along the coast, had some delightful sea-views to the northward of the castle. The coast is here very rocky; but the rocks, being rather soft, are wasted and corroded by the constant action of the waves,—and the fragments which remain, where the softer parts have been washed away, assume the appearance of old Gothic ruins. There are open arches, towers, steeples, and so forth. One part of this scaur is called *Dun Buy*, being coloured yellow by the dung of the sea-fowls, who build there in the most surprising numbers. We caught three young gulls. But the most curious object was the celebrated Buller of Buchan, a huge rocky cauldron, into which the sea rushes through a natural arch of rock. I walked round the top; in one place the path is only about two feet wide, and a monstrous precipice on either side. We then rowed into the cauldron or buller from beneath, and saw nothing around us but a regular wall of black rock, and nothing above but the blue sky. A fishing hamlet had sent out its inhabitants, who, gazing from the brink, looked like sylphs looking down upon gnomes. In the side of the cauldron opens a deep black cavern. Johnson says it might be a retreat from

Digitized by Google

storms, which is nonsense. In a high gale the waves rush in with incredible violence. An old fisher said he had seen them flying over the natural wall of the buller, which cannot be less than 200 feet high. Same old man says Slains is now inhabited by a Mr Bowles, who comes so far from the southward that naebody kens whare he comes frae. 'Was he frae the Indies?'—'Na; he did not think he came that road. He was far frae the southland. Naebody ever heard the name of the place; but he had brought more guid out o' Peterhead than a' the Lords he had seen in Slains, and he had seen three.' About half-past five we left this interesting spot, and after a hard pull, reached the yacht. Weather falls hazy, and rather calm; but at sea we observe vessels enjoying more wind. Pass Peterhead, dimly distinguishing two steeples, and a good many masts. Mormounthill said to resemble a coffin—a likeness of which we could not judge, Mormount being for the present invisible. Pass Rattray-Head: near this cape are dangerous shelves, called the Bridge of Rattray. Here the wreck of the Doris merchant vessel came on shore, lost last year with a number of passengers for Shetland. We lie off all night.

"1*st August.*—Off Frasersburgh—a neat little town. Mr Stevenson and the Commissioners go on shore to look at a light maintained there upon an old castle, on a cape called Kinnaird's Head. The

Digitized by Google

morning being rainy, and no object of curiosity ashore, I remain on board, to make up my journal, and write home.

" The old castle, now bearing the light, is a picturesque object from the sea. It was the baronial mansion of the Frasers, now Lords Saltoun—an old square tower with a minor fortification towards the landing-place on the sea-side. About eleven, the Commissioners came off, and we leave this town, the extreme point of the Moray Firth, to stretch for Shetland—salute the castle with three guns, and stretch out with a merry gale. See Mormount, a long flattish-topped hill near to the West Troup-head, and another bold cliff promontory projecting into the frith. Our gale soon failed, and we are now all but becalmed; songs, ballads, recitations, backgammon, and piquet, for the rest of the day. Noble sunset and moon rising; we are now out of sight of land.

" 2*d August*.—At sea in the mouth of the Moray Frith. This day almost a blank—light baffling airs, which do us very little good; most of the landsmen sick, more or less; piquet, backgammon, and chess, the only resources.—*P. M.* A breeze, and we begin to think we have passed the Fair Isle, lying between Shetland and Orkney, at which it was our intention to have touched. In short, like one of Sinbad's adventures, we have run on till neither captain nor

Digitized by Google

pilot know exactly where we are. The breeze increases — weather may be called rough; worse and worse after we are in our berths, nothing but booming, trampling, and whizzing of waves about our ears, and ever and anon, as we fall asleep, our ribs come in contact with those of the vessel; hail Duff and the Udaller* in the after-cabin, but they are too sick to answer. Towards morning, calm (comparative), and a nap.

"3*d August.* — At sea as before; no appearance of land; proposed that the Sheriff of Zetland do issue a *meditatione fugæ* warrant against his territories, which seem to fly from us. Pass two whalers; speak the nearest, who had come out of Lerwick, which is about twenty miles distant; stand on with a fine breeze. About nine at night, with moonlight and strong twilight, we weather the point of Bard-head, and enter a channel about three-quarters of a mile broad, which forms the southern entrance to the harbour of Lerwick, where we cast anchor about half past ten, and put Mr Turnbull on shore.

"4*th August.* — Harbour of Lerwick. Admire the excellence of this harbour of the metropolis of Shetland. It is a most beautiful place, screened on all sides from the wind by hills of a gentle elevation. The town, a fishing village built irregularly upon a

* Erskine — Sheriff of Shetland and Orknev

Digitized by Google

hill ascending from the shore, has a picturesque appearance. On the left is Fort Charlotte, garrisoned of late by two companies of veterans. The Greenlandmen, of which nine fine vessels are lying in the harbour, add much to the liveliness of the scene. Mr Duncan, sheriff-substitute, came off to pay his respects to his principal; he is married to a daughter of my early acquaintance, Walter Scott of Scotshall. We go ashore. Lerwick, a poor-looking place, the streets flagged instead of being causewayed, for there are no wheel-carriages. The streets full of drunken riotous sailors, from the whale-vessels. It seems these ships take about 1000 sailors from Zetland every year, and return them as they come back from the fishery. Each sailor may gain from £20 to £30, which is paid by the merchants of Lerwick, who have agencies from the owners of the whalers in England. The whole return may be between £25,000 and £30,000. These Zetlanders, as they get a part of this pay on landing, make a point of treating their English messmates, who get drunk of course, and are very riotous. The Zetlanders themselves do *not* get drunk, but go straight home to their houses, and reserve their hilarity for the winter season, when they spend their wages in dancing and drinking. Erskine finds employment as Sheriff, for the neighbourhood of the fort enables him to make *main forte*, and secure a number of the rioters. We

Digitized by Google

visit F. Charlotte, which is a neat little fort mounting ten heavy guns to the sea, but only one to the land. Major F. the Governor, showed us the fort it commands both entrances of the harbour: the north entrance is not very good, but the south capital. The water in the harbour is very deep, as frigates of the smaller class lie almost close to the shore. Take a walk with Captain M'Diarmid, a gentlemanlike and intelligent officer of the garrison; we visit a small fresh-water loch called *Cleik-him-in;* it borders on the sea, from which it is only divided by a sort of beach, apparently artificial: though the sea lashes the outside of this beach, the water of the lake is not brackish. In this lake are the remains of a Picts' Castle, but ruinous. The people think the Castle has not been built on a natural island, but on an artificial one formed by a heap of stones. These Duns or Picts' Castles are so small, it is impossible to conceive what effectual purpose they could serve excepting a temporary refuge for the chief.—Leave *Cleik-him-in*, and proceed along the coast. The ground is dreadfully encumbered with stones; the patches which have been sown with oats and barley, bear very good crops, but they are mere *patches*, the cattle and ponies feeding amongst them, and secured by tethers. The houses most wretched, worse than the worst herd's house I ever saw. It would be easy to form a good farm by

Digitized by Google

enclosing the ground with Galloway dykes, which would answer the purpose of clearing it at the same time of stones; and as there is plenty of lime-shell, marle, and alga-marina, manure could not be wanting. But there are several obstacles to improvement, chiefly the undivided state of the properties, which lie *run-rig;* then the claims of Lord Dundas, the lord of the country, and above all, perhaps, the state of the common people, who, dividing their attention between the fishery and the cultivation, are not much interested in the latter, and are often absent at the proper times of labour. Their ground is chiefly dug with the spade, and their ploughs are beyond description awkward. An odd custom prevails — any person, without exception (if I understand rightly) who wishes to raise a few kail, fixes upon any spot he pleases, encloses it with a dry stone wall, uses it as a kail-yard till he works out the soil, then deserts it and makes another. Some dozen of these little enclosures, about twenty or thirty feet square, are in sight at once. They are called *planty-cruives;* and the Zetlanders are so far from reckoning this an invasion, or a favour on the part of the proprietor, that their most exaggerated description of an avaricious person is one who would refuse liberty for a *planty-cruive;* or to infer the greatest contempt of another, they will say, they would not hold a *planty-cruive* of him. It is needless to notice

Digitized by Google

how much this licence must interfere with cultivation.

"Leaving the *cultivated* land, we turn more inland, and pass two or three small lakes. The muirs are mossy and sterile in the highest degree; the hills are clad with stunted heather, intermixed with huge great stones; much of an astringent root with a yellow flower, called *Tormentil*, used by the islanders in dressing leather in lieu of the oak bark. We climbed a hill, about three miles from Lerwick, to a cairn which presents a fine view of the indented coast of the island, and the distant isles of Mousa and others. Unfortunately the day is rather hazy — return by a circuitous route, through the same sterile country. These muirs are used as a commonty by the proprietors of the parishes in which they lie, and each, without any regard to the extent of his peculiar property, puts as much stock upon them as he chooses. The sheep are miserable looking, hairy-legged creatures, of all colours, even to sky-blue. I often wondered where Jacob got speckled lambs; I think now they must have been of the Shetland stock. In our return, pass the upper end of the little lake of *Cleik-him-in*, which is divided by a rude causeway from another small loch, communicating with it, however, by a sluice, for the purpose of driving a mill. But such a mill! The wheel is horizontal, with the cogs turned diagonally to the water; the beam stands

Digitized by Google

upright, and is inserted in a stone-quern of the old-fashioned construction. This simple machine is enclosed in a hovel about the size of a pig-stye — and there is the mill! * There are about 500 such mills in Shetland, each incapable of grinding more than a sack at a time.

" I cannot get a distinct account of the nature of the land rights. The Udal proprietors have ceased to exist, yet proper feudal tenures seem ill understood. Districts of ground are in many instances understood to belong to Townships or Communities, possessing what may be arable by patches, and what is muir as a commonty, *pro indiviso*. But then individuals of such a Township often take it upon them to grant feus of particular parts of the property thus possessed *pro indiviso*. The town of Lerwick is built upon a part of the commonty of Sound, the proprietors of the houses having feu-rights from different heritors of that Township, but why from one rather than another, or how even the whole Township combining (which has not yet been attempted) could grant such a right upon principle, seems altogether uncertain. In the mean time the chief stress is laid upon occupance. I should have supposed, upon principle, that Lord Dundas, as superior, possessed the *dominium eminens*, and ought to be resorted to as the source of land rights. But

* Here occurs a rude scratch of drawing.

Digitized by Google

it is not so. It has been found that the heritors of each Township hold directly of the Crown, only paying the *Scat*, or Norwegian land-tax, and other duties to his lordship, used and wont. Besides, he has what are called property lands in every Township, or in most, which he lets to his tenants. Lord Dundas is now trying to introduce the system of leases and a better kind of agriculture.* Return home and dine at Sinclair's, a decent inn — Captain M'Diarmid and other gentlemen dine with us. — Sleep at the inn on a straw couch.

"*5th August* 1814. — Hazy disagreeable morning; — Erskine trying the rioters — notwithstanding which, a great deal of rioting still in the town. The Greenlanders, however, only quarrelled among themselves, and the Zetland sailors seemed to exert themselves in keeping peace. They are, like all the other Zetlanders I have seen, a strong, clear-complexioned, handsome race, and the women are very pretty. The females are rather slavishly employed, however, and I saw more than one carrying home the heavy sea-chests of their husbands, brothers, or lovers, discharged from on board the Greenlanders. The Zetlanders are, however, so far provident, that when they enter the navy they make liberal allowance of their pay for their wives and families. Not less than £15,000 a-year has been lately paid by the Ad-

* Lord Dundas was created Earl of Zetland in 1838, and died in February 1839.

Digitized by Google

miralty on this account; yet this influx of money, with that from the Greenland fishery, seems rather to give the means of procuring useless indulgences than of augmenting the stock of productive labour. Mr Collector Ross tells me, that from the King's books it appears that the quantity of spirits, tea, coffee, tobacco, snuff, and sugar, imported annually into Lerwick for the consumption of Zetland, averages at sale price, £20,000 yearly, at the least. Now the inhabitants of Zetland, men, women, and children, do not exceed 22,000 in all, and the proportion of foreign luxuries seems monstrous, unless we allow for the habits contracted by the seamen in their foreign trips. Tea, in particular, is used by all ranks, and porridge quite exploded.

"We parade Lerwick. The most remarkable thing is, that the main street being flagged, and all the others very narrow lanes descending the hill by steps, anything like a cart, of the most ordinary and rude construction, seems not only out of question when the town was built, but in its present state quite excluded. A road of five miles in length, on the line between Lerwick and Scalloway, has been already made — upon a very awkward and expensive plan, and ill-lined as may be supposed. But it is proposed to extend this road by degrees: carts will then be introduced, and by crossing the breed of their ponies judiciously, they will have Galloways

Digitized by Google

to draw them. The streets of Lerwick (as one blunder perpetrates another) will then be a bar to improvement, for till the present houses are greatly altered, no cart can approach the quay. In the garden of Captain Nicolson, R.N., which is rather in a flourishing state, he has tried various trees, almost all of which have died except the willow. But the plants seem to me to be injured in their passage; seeds would perhaps do better. We are visited by several of the notables of the island, particularly Mr Mowat, a considerable proprietor, who claims acquaintance with me as the friend of my father, and remembers me as a boy. The day clearing up, Duff and I walk with this good old gentleman to *Cleikhim-in*, and with some trouble drag a boat off the beach into the fresh-water loch, and go to visit the Picts' castle. It is of considerable size, and consists of three circular walls, of huge natural stones admirably combined without cement. The outer circuit seems to have been simply a bounding wall or bulwark; the second or interior defence contains lodgements such as I shall describe. This inner circuit is surrounded by a wall of about sixteen or eighteen feet thick, composed, as I said, of huge massive stones placed in layers with great art, but without mortar or cement. The wall is not perpendicular, but the circle lessens gradually towards the top, as an old-fashioned pigeon-house. Up the interior of this

Digitized by Google

wall there proceeds a circular winding gallery ascending in the form of an inclined plane, so as to gain the top by circling round like a cork-screw within the walls. This is enlightened by little apertures (about two feet by three) into the inside, and also, it is said, by small slits — of which I saw none. It is said there are marks of galleries within the circuit, running parallel to the horizon; these I saw no remains of; and the interior gallery, with its apertures, is so extremely low and narrow, being only about three feet square, that it is difficult to conceive how it could serve the purpose of communication. At any rate, the size fully justifies the tradition prevalent here as well as in the south of Scotland, that the Picts were a diminutive race. More of this when we see the more perfect specimen of a Pict castle in Mousa, which we resolve to examine, if it be possible. Certainly I am deeply curious to see what must be one of the most ancient houses in the world, built by a people who, while they seem to have bestowed much pains on their habitations, knew neither the art of cement, of arches, or of stairs. The situation is wild, dreary, and impressive. On the land side are huge sheets and fragments of rocks, interspersed with a stinted vegetation of grass and heath, which bears no proportion to the rocks and stones. From the top of his tower the Pictish Monarch might look out upon a stormy sea, washing

Digitized by Google

a succession of rocky capes, reaches, and headlands, and immediately around him was the deep fresh-water loch on which his fortress was constructed. It communicates with the land by a sort of causeway, formed, like the artificial islet itself, by heaping together stones till the pile reached the surface of the water. This is usually passable, but at present overflooded. — Return and dine with Mr Duncan, Sheriff-substitute — are introduced to Dr Edmonstone, author of a History of Shetland, who proposes to accompany us to-morrow to see the Cradle of Noss. I should have mentioned that Mr Stevenson sailed this morning with the yacht to survey some isles to the northward; he returns on Saturday, it is hoped.

"6*th August.* — Hire a six-oared boat, whaler-built, with a taper point at each end, so that the rudder can be hooked on either at pleasure. These vessels look very frail, but are admirably adapted to the stormy seas, where they live when a ship's boat stiffly and compactly built must necessarily perish. They owe this to their elasticity and lightness. Some of the rowers wear a sort of coats of dressed sheep leather, sewed together with thongs. We sailed out at the southern inlet of the harbour, rounding successively the capes of the Hammer, Kirkubus, the Ving, and others, consisting of bold cliffs, hollowed into caverns, or divided into pillars and arches of

Digitized by Google

fantastic appearance, by the constant action of the waves. As we passed the most northerly of these capes, called, I think, the Ord, and turned into the open sea, the scenes became yet more tremendously sublime. Rocks upwards of three or four hundred feet in height, presented themselves in gigantic succession, sinking perpendicularly into the main, which is very deep even within a few fathoms of their base. One of these capes is called the Bard-head; a huge projecting arch is named the Giant's Leg.

'Here the lone sea-bird wakes its wildest cry.'*

Not lone, however, in one sense, for their numbers and the variety of their tribes are immense, though I think they do not quite equal those of Dunbuy, on the coast of Buchan. Standing across a little bay, we reached the Isle of Noss, having hitherto coasted the shore of Bressay. Here we see a detached and precipitous rock, or island, being a portion rent by a narrow sound from the rest of the cliff, and called the Holm. This detached rock is wholly inaccessible, unless by a pass of peril, entitled the Cradle of Noss, which is a sort of wooden chair, travelling from precipice to precipice on rings, which run upon two cables stretched across over the gulf. We viewed this extraordinary contrivance from beneath, at the distance of perhaps one hundred fathoms

* Campbell — *Pleasures of Hope.*

Digitized by Google

at least. The boatmen made light of the risk of crossing it, but it must be tremendous to a brain disposed to be giddy. Seen from beneath, a man in the basket would resemble a large crow or raven floating between rock and rock. The purpose of this strange contrivance is to give the tenant the benefit of putting a few sheep upon the Holm, the top of which is level, and affords good pasture. The animals are transported in the cradle by one at a time, a shepherd holding them upon his knees. The channel between the Holm and the isle is passable by boats in calm weather, but not at the time when we saw it. Rowing on through a heavy tide, and nearer the breakers than any but Zetlanders would have ventured, we rounded another immensely high cape, called by the islanders the Noup of Noss, but by sailors Hang-cliff, from its having a projecting appearance. This was the highest rock we had yet seen, though not quite perpendicular. Its height has never been measured: I should judge it exceeds 600 feet; it has been conjectured to measure 800 and upwards. Our steersman had often descended this precipitous rock, having only the occasional assistance of a rope, one end of which he secured from time to time round some projecting cliff. The collecting sea-fowl for their feathers was the object, and he might gain five or six dozen, worth eight or ten shillings, by such an adventure. These huge precipices abound with caverns, many of which run

Digitized by Google

much farther into the rock than any one has ventured to explore. We entered (with much hazard to our boat) one called the Orkney-man's Harbour, because an Orkney vessel run in there some years since to escape a French privateer. The entrance was lofty enough to admit us without striking the mast, but a sudden turn in the direction of the cave would have consigned us to utter darkness if we had gone in farther. The dropping of the sea-fowl and cormorants into the water from the sides of the cavern, when disturbed by our approach, had something in it wild and terrible.

" After passing the Noup, the precipices become lower, and sink into a rocky shore with deep indentations, called by the natives, *Gios*. Here we would fain have landed to visit the Cradle from the top of the cliff, but the surf rendered it impossible. We therefore rowed on like Thalaba in ' Allah's name,' around the Isle of Noss, and landed upon the opposite side of the small sound which divides it from Bressay. Noss exactly resembles in shape Salisbury crags, supposing the sea to flow down the valley called the Hunter's bog, and round the foot of the precipice. The eastern part of the isle is fine smooth pasture, the best I have seen in these isles, sloping upwards to the verge of the tremendous rocks which form its western front.

" As we are to dine at Gardie-House (the seat of

Digitized by Google

young Mr Mowat), on the Isle of Bressay, Duff and I—who went together on this occasion—resolve to walk across the island, about three miles, being by this time thoroughly wet. Bressay is a black and heathy isle, full of little lochs and bogs. Through storm and shade, and dense and dry, we find our way to Gardie, and have then to encounter the sublunary difficulties of wanting the keys of our portmanteaus, &c., the servants having absconded to see the Cradle. These being overcome, we are most hospitably treated at Gardie. Young Mr Mowat, son of my old friend, is an improver, and a *moderate* one. He has got a ploughman from Scotland, who acts as *grieve*, but as yet with the prejudices and inconveniences which usually attach themselves to the most salutary experiments. The ploughman complains that the Zetlanders work as if a spade or hoe burned their fingers, and that though they only got a shilling a-day, yet the labour of three of them does not exceed what one good hand in Berwickshire would do for 2s. 6d. The islanders retort, that a man can do no more than he can; that they are not used to be taxed to their work so severely; that they will work as their fathers did, and not otherwise; and at first the landlord found difficulty in getting hands to work under his Caledonian taskmaster. Besides, they find fault with his *ho*, and *gee*, and *wo*, when ploughing. 'He speaks to the

Digitized by Google

horse,' they say, 'and they gang — and there's something no canny about the man.' In short, between the prejudices of laziness and superstition, the ploughman leads a sorry life of it; yet these prejudices are daily abating, under the steady and indulgent management of the proprietor. Indeed, nowhere is improvement in agriculture more necessary. An old-fashioned Zetland plough is a real curiosity. It had but one handle, or stilt, and a coulter, but no sock; it ripped the furrow, therefore, but did not throw it aside. When this precious machine was in motion, it was dragged by four little bullocks yoked a-breast, and as many ponies harnessed, or rather strung, to the plough by ropes and thongs of raw hide. One man went before walking backward, with his face to the bullocks, and pulling them forward by main strength. Another held down the plough by its single handle, and made a sort of slit in the earth, which two women, who closed the procession, converted into a furrow, by throwing the earth aside with shovels. An antiquary might be of opinion that this was the very model of the original plough invented by Triptolemus; and it is but justice to Zetland to say, that these relics of ancient agricultural art will soon have all the interest attached to rarity. We could only hear of one of these ploughs within three miles of Lerwick.

Digitized by Google

"'This and many other barbarous habits to which the Zetlanders were formerly wedded, seem only to have subsisted because their amphibious character of fishers and farmers induced them to neglect agricultural arts. A Zetland farmer looks to the sea to pay his rent; if the land finds him a little meal and kail, and (if he be a very clever fellow) a few potatoes, it is very well. The more intelligent part of the landholders are sensible of all this, but argue like men of good sense and humanity on the subject. To have good farming, you must have a considerable farm, upon which capital may be laid out to advantage. But to introduce this change suddenly would turn adrift perhaps twenty families, who now occupy small farms *pro indiviso*, cultivating by patches, or *rundale* and *runrig*, what part of the property is arable, and stocking the pasture as a common upon which each family turns out such stock as they can rear, without observing any proportion as to the number which it can support. In this way many townships, as they are called, subsist indeed, but in a precarious and indigent manner. Fishing villages seem the natural resource for this excess of population; but, besides the expense of erecting them, the habits of the people are to be considered, who, with 'one foot on land and one on sea,' would be with equal reluctance confined to either element. The remedy seems to be, that the larger proprietors

Digitized by Google

should gradually set the example of better cultivation, and introduce better implements. They will, by degrees, be imitated by the inferior proprietors, and by their tenants; and, as turnips and hay crops become more general, a better and heavier class of stock will naturally be introduced.

"The sheep in particular might be improved into a valuable stock, and would no doubt thrive, since the winters are very temperate. But I should be sorry that extensive pasture farms were introduced, as it would tend to diminish a population invaluable for the supply of our navy. The improvement of the arable land, on the contrary, would soon set them beyond the terrors of famine with which the islanders are at present occasionally visited; and, combined with fisheries, carried on not by farmers, but by real fishers, would amply supply the inhabitants, without diminishing the export of dried fish. This separation of trades will in time take place, and then the prosperous days of Zetland will begin. The proprietors are already upon the alert, studying the means of gradual improvement, and no humane person would wish them to drive it on too rapidly, to the distress and perhaps destruction of the numerous tenants who have been bred under a different system.

"I have gleaned something of the peculiar superstitions of the Zetlanders, which are numerous and

Digitized by Google

potent. Witches, fairies, &c., are as numerous as ever they were in Teviotdale. The latter are called *Trows*, probably from the Norwegian *Dwärg* (or *dwarf)* the D being readily converted into T. The dwarfs are the prime agents in the machinery of Norwegian superstition. The *trows* do not differ from the fairies of the Lowlands, or *Sighean* of the Highlanders. They steal children, dwell within the interior of green hills, and often carry mortals into their recesses. Some, yet alive, pretend to have been carried off in this way, and obtain credit for the marvels they tell of the subterranean habitations of the trows. Sometimes, when a person becomes melancholy and low-spirited, the trows are supposed to have stolen the real being, and left a moving phantom to represent him. Sometimes they are said to steal only the heart—like Lancashire witches. There are cures in each case. The party's friends resort to a cunning man or woman, who hangs about the neck a triangular stone in the shape of a heart, or conjures back the lost individual, by retiring to the hills and employing the necessary spells. A common receipt, when a child appears consumptive and puny, is, that the conjurer places a bowl of water on the patient's head, and pours melted lead into it through the wards of a key. The metal assumes of course a variety of shapes, from which he selects a portion, after due consideration, which is

Digitized by Google

sewn into the shirt of the patient. Sometimes no part of the lead suits the seer's fancy. Then the operation is recommenced, until he obtains a fragment of such a configuration as suits his mystical purpose. Mr Duncan told us he had been treated in this way when a boy.

"A worse and most horrid opinion prevails, or did prevail, among the fishers—namely, that he who saves a drowning man will receive at his hands some deep wrong or injury. Several instances were quoted to-day in company, in which the utmost violence had been found necessary to compel the fishers to violate this inhuman prejudice. It is conjectured to have arisen as an apology for rendering no assistance to the mariners as they escaped from a shipwrecked vessel, for these isles are infamous for plundering wrecks. A story is told of the crew of a stranded vessel who were warping themselves ashore by means of a hawser which they had fixed to the land. The islanders (of Unst, as I believe) watched their motions in silence, till an old man reminded them that if they suffered these sailors to come ashore, they would consume all their winter stock of provisions. A Zetlander cut the hawser, and the poor wretches, twenty in number, were all swept away. This is a tale of former times—the cruelty would not now be *active;* but I fear that even yet the drowning mariner would in some places receive no assistance

Digitized by Google

in his exertions, and certainly he would in most be plundered to the skin upon his landing. The gentlemen do their utmost to prevent this infamous practice. It may seem strange that the natives should be so little affected by a distress to which they are themselves so constantly exposed. But habitual exposure to danger hardens the heart against its consequences, whether to ourselves or others. There is yet living a man — if he can be called so — to whom the following story belongs: — He was engaged in catching sea-fowl upon one of the cliffs, with his father and brother. All three were suspended by a cord, according to custom, and overhanging the ocean at the height of some hundred feet. This man being uppermost on the cord, observed that it was giving way, as unable to support their united weight. He called out to his brother who was next to him — 'Cut away a nail below, Willie,' meaning he should cut the rope beneath, and let his father drop. Willie refused, and bid him cut himself, if he pleased. He did so, and his brother and father were precipitated into the sea. He never thought of concealing or denying the adventure in all its parts. We left Gardie-House late; being on the side of the Isle of Bressay, opposite to Lerwick, we were soon rowed across the bay. A laugh with Hamilton,* whose

* Robert Hamilton, Sheriff of Lanarkshire, and afterwards one of the Clerks of Session, was a particular favourite of Scott —

Digitized by Google

gout keeps him stationary at Lerwick, but whose good-humour defies gout and every other provocation, concludes the evening.

"*7th August* 1814. — Being Sunday, Duff, Erskine, and I, rode to Tingwall upon Zetland ponies, to breakfast with our friend Parson Turnbull, who had come over in our yacht. An ill-conducted and worse-made road served us four miles on our journey. This *Via Flaminia* of Thule terminates, like its prototype, in a bog. It is, however, the only road in these isles, except about half a mile made by Mr Turnbull. The land in the interior much resembles the Peel-heights, near Ashestiel; but, as you approach the other side of the island, becomes better. Tingwall is rather a fertile valley, up which winds a loch of about two miles in length. The kirk and manse stand at the head of the loch, and command a view down the valley to another

---

first, among many other good reasons, because he had been a soldier in his youth, had fought gallantly and been wounded severely in the American war, and was a very Uncle Toby in military enthusiasm; 2dly, because he was a brother antiquary of the genuine Monkbarns breed; 3dly (last not least), because he was, in spite of the example of the head of his name and race, a steady Tory. Mr Hamilton sent for Scott when upon his deathbed in 1831, and desired him to choose and carry off as a parting memorial, any article he liked in his collection of arms. Sir Walter (by that time sorely shattered in his own health) selected the sword with which his good friend had been begirt at Bunker's Hill.

Digitized by Google

lake beyond the first, and thence over another reach of land, to the ocean, indented by capes and studded with isles; among which, that of St Ninian's, abruptly divided from the mainland by a deep chasm, is the most conspicuous. Mr Turnbull is a Jedburgh man by birth, but a Zetlander by settlement and inclination. I have reason to be proud of my countryman; — he is doing his best, with great patience and judgment, to set a good example both in temporals and spirituals, and is generally beloved and respected among all classes. His glebe is in far the best order of any ground I have seen in Zetland. It is enclosed chiefly with dry-stone, instead of the useless turf-dikes; and he has sown grass, and has a hay-stack, and a second crop of clover, and may claim well-dressed fields of potatoes, barley, and oats. The people around him are obviously affected by his example. He gave us an excellent discourse and remarkably good prayers, which are seldom the excellence of the Presbyterian worship.* The congregation were numerous, decent, clean, and well-dressed. The men have all the air of seamen, and are a good-looking hardy race. Some of the old fellows had got faces much resembling Tritons; if they had had conchs to blow, it would have completed them.

* During the winter of 1837–8, this worthy clergyman's wife, his daughter, and a servant, perished within sight of the manse, from a flaw in the ice on the loch — which they were crossing as the nearest way home. — [1839.]

Digitized by Google

After church, ride down the loch to Scalloway—the country wild but pleasant, with sloping hills of good pasturage, and patches of cultivation on the lower ground. Pass a huge standing stone or pillar. Here, it is said, the son of an old Earl of the Orkneys met his fate. He had rebelled against his father, and fortified himself in Zetland. The Earl sent a party to dislodge him, who, not caring to proceed to violence against his person, failed in the attempt. The Earl then sent a stronger force, with orders to take him dead or alive. The young Absalom's castle was stormed—he himself fled across the loch, and was overtaken and slain at this pillar. The Earl afterwards executed the perpetrators of this slaughter, though they had only fulfilled his own mandate.

"We reach Scalloway, and visit the ruins of an old castle, composed of a double tower or keep, with turrets at the corners. It is the principal, if not the only ruin of Gothic times in Zetland, and is of very recent date, being built in 1600. It was built by Patrick Stewart, Earl of Orkney, afterwards deservedly executed at Edinburgh for many acts of tyranny and oppression. It was this rapacious Lord who imposed many of those heavy duties still levied from the Zetlanders by Lord Dundas. The exactions by which he accomplished this erection were represented as grievous. He was so dreaded, that upon his trial one Zetland witness refused to say a word till he was assured that there was no chance of the

Digitized by Google

Earl returning to Scalloway. Over the entrance of the castle are his arms, much defaced, with the unicorns of Scotland for supporters, the assumption of which was one of the articles of indictment. There is a Scriptural inscription also above the door, in Latin, now much defaced —

'PATRICIUS ORCHADIÆ ET ZETLANDIÆ COMES. A. D. 1600.
CUJUS FUNDAMEN SAXUM EST, DOMUS ILLA MANEBIT
STABILIS: E CONTRA, SI SIT ARENA, PERIT.'

"This is said to have been furnished to Earl Patrick by a Presbyterian divine, who slily couched under it an allusion to the evil practices by which the Earl had established his power. He perhaps trusted that the language might disguise the import from the Earl.* If so, the Scottish nobility are im-

* In his reviewal of Pitcairn's Trials (1831), Scott says—"In erecting this Earl's Castle of Scalloway, and other expensive edifices, the King's tenants were forced to work in quarries, transport stone, dig, delve, climb, and build, and submit to all possible sorts of servile and painful labour, without either meat, drink, hire, or recompense of any kind. 'My father,' said Earl Patrick, 'built his house at Sumburgh on the sand, and it has given way already; this of mine on the rock shall abide and endure.' He did not or would not understand that the oppression, rapacity and cruelty by means of which the house arose, were what the clergyman really pointed to in his recommendation of a motto. Accordingly, the huge tower remains wild and desolate — its chambers filled with sand, and its rifted walls and dismantled battlements giving unrestrained access to the roaring sea blast."— For more of Earl Patrick, see Scott's Miscellaneous Prose Works, vol. xxi. pp. 230, 233; vol. xxiii. pp. 327, 329.

Digitized by Google

proved in literature, for the Duke of Gordon pointed out an error in the Latinity.

" Scalloway has a beautiful and very safe harbour, but as it is somewhat difficult of access, from a complication of small islands, it is inferior to Lerwick. Hence, though still nominally the capital of Zetland, for all edictal citations are made at Scalloway, it has sunk into a small fishing hamlet. The Norwegians made their original settlement in this parish of Tingwall. At the head of this loch, and just below the manse, is a small round islet accessible by stepping-stones, where they held their courts; hence the islet is called Law-ting — Ting, or Thing, answering to our word business, exactly like the Latin *negotium*. It seems odd that in Dumfries-shire, and even in the Isle of Man, where the race and laws were surely Celtic, we have this Gothic word Ting and Tingwald applied in the same way. We dined with Mr Scott of Scalloway, who, like several families of this name in Shetland, is derived from the house of Scotstarvet. They are very clannish, marry much among themselves, and are proud of their descent. Two young ladies, daughters of Mr Scott's, dined with us — they were both Mrs Scotts, having married brothers — the husband of one was lost in the unfortunate Doris. They were pleasant, intelligent women, and exceedingly obliging. Old Mr Scott seems a good country gentleman. He is negotiating

Digitized by Google

an exchange with Lord Dundas, which will give him the Castle of Scalloway and two or three neighbouring islands: the rest of the archipelago (seven I think in number) are already his own. He will thus have command of the whole fishing and harbour, for which he parts with an estate of more immediate value, lying on the other side of the mainland. I found my name made me very popular in this family, and there were many enquiries after the state of the Buccleuch family, in which they seemed to take much interest. I found them possessed of the remarkable circumstances attending the late projected sale of Ancrum, and the death of Sir John Scott, and thought it strange that, settled for three generations in a country so distant, they should still take an interest in those matters. I was loaded with shells and little curiosities for my young people.

" There was a report (January was two years) of a kraken or some monstrous fish being seen off Scalloway. The object was visible for a fortnight, but nobody dared approach it, although I should have thought the Zetlanders would not have feared the devil if he came by water. They pretended that the suction, when they came within a certain distance, was so great as to endanger their boats. The object was described as resembling a vessel with her keel turned upmost in the sea, or a small ridge of rock or island. Mr Scott thinks it might have been a ves-

Digitized by Google

sel overset, or a large whale: if the latter, it seems odd they should not have known it, as whales are the intimate acquaintances of all Zetland sailors. Whatever it was, it disappeared after a heavy gale of wind, which seems to favour the idea that it was the wreck of a vessel. Mr Scott seems to think Pontopiddan's narrations and descriptions are much more accurate than we inland men suppose; and I find most Zetlanders of the same opinion. Mr Turnbull, who is not credulous upon these subjects, tells me that this year a parishioner of his, a well-informed and veracious person, saw an animal, which, if his description was correct, must have been of the species of sea-snake, driven ashore on one of the Orkneys two or three years ago. It was very long, and seemed about the thickness of a Norway log, and swam on the top of the waves, occasionally lifting and bending its head. Mr T. says he has no doubt of the veracity of the narrator, but still thinks it possible it may have been a mere log or beam of wood, and that the spectator may have been deceived by the motion of the waves, joined to the force of imagination. This for the Duke of Buccleuch.

"At Scalloway my curiosity was gratified by an account of the sword-dance, now almost lost, but still practised in the Island of Papa, belonging to Mr Scott. There are eight performers, seven of whom

Digitized by Google

represent the Seven Champions of Christendom, who enter one by one with their swords drawn, and are presented to the eighth personage, who is not named. Some rude couplets are spoken (in *English*, not *Norse)*, containing a sort of panegyric upon each champion as he is presented. They then dance a sort of cotillion, as the ladies described it, going through a number of evolutions with their swords. One of my three Mrs Scotts readily promised to procure me the lines, the rhymes, and the form of the dance. I regret much that young Mr Scott was absent during this visit; he is described as a reader and an enthusiast in poetry. Probably I might have interested him in preserving the dance, by causing young persons to learn it. A few years since, a party of Papa-men came to dance the sword-dance at Lerwick as a public exhibition with great applause. The warlike dances of the northern people, of which I conceive this to be the only remnant in the British dominions,* are repeatedly alluded to by their poets and historians. The introduction of the Seven Champions savours of a later period, and was probably ingrafted upon the dance when *mysteries* and *mo-*

* Mr W. S. Rose informs me, that when he was at school at Winchester, the morris-dancers there used to exhibit a sword-dance resembling that described at Camacho's wedding in Don Quixote; and Mr Morritt adds, that similar dances are even yet performed in the villages about Rokeby every Christmas.

Digitized by Google

ralities (the first scenic representations) came into fashion. In a stall pamphlet, called the history of Buckshaven, it is said those fishers sprung from Danes, and brought with them their *war-dance* or *sword-dance*, and a rude wooden cut of it is given. We resist the hospitality of our entertainers, and return to Lerwick despite a most downright fall of rain. My pony stumbles coming down hill; saddle sways round, having but one girth and that too long, and lays me on my back. *N. B.* The bogs in Zetland as soft as those in Liddisdale. Get to Lerwick about ten at night. No yacht has appeared.

"8*th August.*—No yacht, and a rainy morning; bring up my journal. Day clears up, and we go to pay our farewell visits of thanks to the hospitable Lerwegians, and at the Fort. Visit kind old Mr Mowat, and walk with him and Collector Ross to the point of Quaggers, or Twaggers, which forms one arm of the southern entrance to the sound of Bressay. From the eminence a delightful sea view, with several of those narrow capes and deep reaches or inlets of the sea, which indent the shores of that land. On the right hand a narrow bay, bounded by the isthmus of Sound, with a house upon it resembling an old castle. In the indenture of the bay, and divided from the sea by a slight causeway, the lake of *Cleik-him-in*, with its Pictish castle. Beyond this the bay opens another yet; and, behind

Digitized by Google

all, a succession of capes, headlands, and islands, as far as the cape called Sumburgh-head, which is the furthest point of Zetland in that direction. Inland, craggy, and sable muirs, with cairns, among which we distinguish the Wart or Ward of Wick, to which we walked on the 4th. On the left the island of Bressay, with its peaked hill called the Wart of Bressay. Over Bressay see the top of Hang-cliff. Admire the Bay of Lerwick, with its shipping, widening out to the northwards, and then again contracted into a narrow sound, through which the infamous Bothwell was pursued by Kirkaldy of Grange, until he escaped through the dexterity of his pilot, who sailed close along a sunken rock, upon which Kirkaldy, keeping the weather-gage, struck, and sustained damage. The rock is visible at low water, and is still called the Unicorn, from the name of Kirkaldy's vessel. Admire Mr Mowat's little farm. of about thirty acres, bought about twenty years since for £75, and redeemed from the miserable state of the surrounding country, so that it now bears excellent corn; here also was a hay crop. With Mr Turnbull's it makes two. Visit Mr Ross, collector of the customs, who presents me with the most superb collection of the stone axes (or adzes, or whatever they are), called *celts*. The Zetlanders call them *thunderbolts*, and keep them in their houses as a receipt against thunder; but the Col-

Digitized by Google

lector has succeeded in obtaining several. We are now to dress for dinner with the Notables of Lerwick, who give us an entertainment in their Town hall. Oho!

"Just as we were going to dinner, the yacht appeared, and Mr Stevenson landed. He gives a most favourable account of the isles to the northward, particularly Unst. I believe Lerwick is the worst part of Shetland. Are hospitably received and entertained by the Lerwick gentlemen. They are a quick intelligent race — chiefly of Scottish birth, as appears from their names Mowat, Gifford, Scott, and so forth. These are the chief proprietors. The Norwegian or Danish surnames, though of course the more ancient, belong, with some exceptions, to the lower ranks. The Veteran Corps expects to be disbanded, and the officers and Lerwegians seem to part with regret. Some of the officers talk of settling here. The price of everything is moderate, and the style of living unexpensive. Against these conveniences are to be placed a total separation from public life, news, and literature; and a variable and inhospitable climate. Lerwick will suffer most severely if the Fort is not occupied by some force or other; for, between whisky and frolic, the Greenland sailors will certainly burn the little town. We have seen a good deal, and heard much more, of the pranks of these unruly guests. A gentleman of Lerwick,

Digitized by Google

who had company to dine with him, observed beneath his window a party of sailors eating a leg of roast mutton, which he witnessed with philanthropic satisfaction, till he received the melancholy information, that that individual leg of mutton, being the very sheet-anchor of his own entertainment, had been violently carried off from his kitchen, spit and all, by these honest gentlemen, who were now devouring it. Two others having carried off a sheep, were apprehended, and brought before a Justice of the Peace, who questioned them respecting the fact. The first denied he had taken the sheep, but said he had seen it taken away by a fellow with a red nose and a black wig—(this was the Justice's description)—'Don't you think he was like his honour, Tom?' he added, appealing to his comrade. 'By G—, Jack,' answered Tom, 'I believe it was the very man!' Erskine has been busy with these facetious gentlemen, and has sent several to prison, but nothing could have been done without the soldiery. We leave Lerwick at eight o'clock, and sleep on board the yacht.

"*9th August* 1814.—Waked at seven, and find the vessel has left Lerwick harbour, and is on the point of entering the sound which divides the small island of Mousa (or Queen's island) from Conings-burgh, a very wild part of the main island so called. Went ashore, and see the very ancient castle of

Digitized by Google

Mousa, which stands close on the sea-shore. It is a Pictish fortress, the most entire probably in the world. In form it resembles a dice-box, for the truncated cone is continued only to a certain height, after which it begins to rise perpendicularly, or rather with a tendency to expand outwards. The building is round, and has been surrounded with an outer-wall, of which hardly the slightest vestiges now remain. It is composed of a layer of stones, without cement; they are not of large size, but rather small and thin. To give a vulgar comparison, it resembles an old ruinous pigeon-house. Mr Stevenson took the dimensions of this curious fort, which are as follows:—Outside diameter at the base is fifty-two feet; at the top thirty-eight feet. The diameter of the interior at the base is nineteen feet six inches; at the top twenty-one feet; the curve in the inside being the reverse of the outside, or nearly so. The thickness of the walls at the base seventeen feet; at the top eight feet six inches. The height outside forty-two feet; the inside thirty-four feet. The door or entrance faces the sea, and the interior is partly filled with rubbish. When you enter you see, in the inner wall, a succession of small openings like windows, directly one above another, with broad flat stones, serving for lintels; these are about nine inches thick. The whole resembles a ladder. There were four of these perpendicular rows of windows

Digitized by Google

or apertures, the situation of which corresponds with the cardinal points of the compass. You enter the galleries contained in the thickness of the wall by two of these apertures, which have been broken down. These interior spaces are of two descriptions: one consists of a winding ascent, not quite an inclined plane, yet not by any means a regular stair; but the edges of the stones, being suffered to project irregularly, serve for rude steps—or a kind of assistance. Through this narrow staircase, which winds round the building, you creep up to the top of the castle, which is partly ruinous. But besides the staircase, there branch off at irregular intervals horizontal galleries, which go round the whole building, and receive air from the holes I formerly mentioned. These apertures vary in size, diminishing as they run, from about thirty inches in width by eighteen in height, till they are only about a foot square. The lower galleries are full man height, but narrow. They diminish both in height and width as they ascend, and as the thickness of the wall in which they are enclosed diminishes. The uppermost gallery is so narrow and low, that it was with great difficulty I crept through it. The walls are built very irregularly, the sweep of the cone being different on the different sides.

"It is said by Torfæus that this fort was repaired and strengthened by Erlind, who, having forcibly

Digitized by Google

carried off the mother of Harold Earl of the Orkneys, resolved to defend himself to extremity in this place against the insulted Earl. How a castle could be defended which had no opening to the outside for shooting arrows, and which was of a capacity to be pulled to pieces by the assailants, who could advance without annoyance to the bottom of the wall (unless it were battlemented upon the top), does not easily appear. But to Erlind's operations the castle of Mousa possibly owes the upper and perpendicular, or rather overhanging, part of its elevation, and also its rude staircase. In these two particulars it seems to differ from all other Picts' castles, which are ascended by an inclined plane, and generally, I believe, terminate in a truncated cone, without that strange counterpart of the perpendicular or projecting part of the upper wall. Opposite to the castle of Mousa are the ruins of another Pictish fort: indeed, they all communicate with each other through the isles. The island of Mousa is the property of a Mr Piper, who has improved it considerably, and values his castle. I advised him to clear out the interior, as he tells us there are three or four galleries beneath those now accessible, and the difference of height between the exterior and interior warrants his assertion.

"We get on board, and in time, for the wind freshens, and becomes contrary. We beat down to Sumburgh-head, through rough weather. This is

Digitized by Google

the extreme south-eastern point of Zetland; and as the Atlantic and German oceans unite at this point, a frightful tide runs here, called Sumburgh-rost. The breeze, contending with the tide, flings the breakers in great style upon the high broken cliffs of Sumburgh-head. They are all one white foam, ascending to a great height. We wished to double this point, and lie by in a bay between that and the northern or north-western cape, called Fitful-head, and which seems higher than Sumburgh itself—and tacked repeatedly with this view; but a confounded islet, called *The Horse*, always baffled us, and, after three heats, fairly distanced us. So we run into a roadstead, called Quendal bay, on the south-eastern side, and there anchor for the night. We go ashore with various purposes—Stevenson to see the site of a proposed lighthouse on this tremendous cape—Marjoribanks to shoot rabbits—and Duff and I to look about us.

"I ascended the head by myself, which is lofty, and commands a wild sea-view. Zetland stretches away, with all its projecting capes and inlets, to the north-eastward. Many of those inlets approach each other very nearly; indeed, the two opposite bays at Sumburgh-head seem on the point of joining, and rendering that cape an island. The two creeks from those east and western seas are only divided by a low isthmus of blowing sand, and simi-

Digitized by Google

lar to that which wastes part of the east coast of Scotland. It has here blown like the deserts of Arabia, and destroyed some houses, formerly the occasional residences of the Earls of Orkney. The steep and rocky side of the cape, which faces the west, does not seem much more durable. These lofty cliffs are all of sand-flag, a very loose and perishable kind of rock, which slides down in immense masses, like avalanches, after every storm. The rest lies so loose, that, on the very brow of the loftiest crag, I had no difficulty in sending down a fragment as large as myself: he thundered down in tremendous style, but splitting upon a projecting cliff, descended into the ocean like a shower of shrapnel shot. The sea beneath rages incessantly among a thousand of the fragments which have fallen from the peaks, and which assume an hundred strange shapes. It would have been a fine situation to compose an ode to the Genius of Sumburgh-head, or an Elegy upon a Cormorant — or to have written and spoken madness of any kind in prose or poetry. But I gave vent to my excited feelings in a more simple way; and sitting gently down on the steep green slope which led to the beach, I e'en slid down a few hundred feet, and found the exercise quite an adequate vent to my enthusiasm. I recommend this exercise (time and place suiting) to all my brother scribblers, and I have no doubt it will save much

Digitized by Google

effusion of Christian ink. Those slopes are covered with beautiful short herbage. At the foot of the ascent, and towards the isthmus, is the old house of Sumburgh, in appearance a most dreary mansion. I found, on my arrival at the beach, that the hospitality of the inhabitants had entrapped my companions. I walked back to meet them, but escaped the gin and water. On board about nine o'clock at night. A little schooner lies between us and the shore, which we had seen all day buffeting the tide and breeze like ourselves. The wind increases, and the ship is made SNUG — a sure sign the passengers will not be so.

"10*th August* 1814. — The omen was but too true — a terrible combustion on board, among plates, dishes, glasses, writing-desks, &c. &c.; not a wink of sleep. We weigh and stand out into that delightful current called *Sumburgh-rost*, or *rust*. This tide certainly owes us a grudge, for it drove us to the eastward about thirty miles on the night of the first, and occasioned our missing the Fair Isle, and now it has caught us on our return. All the landsmen sicker than sick, and our Viceroy, Stevenson, qualmish. This is the only time that I have felt more than temporary inconvenience, but this morning I have headach and nausea; these are trifles, and in a well-found vessel, with a good pilot, we have none of that mixture of danger which gives

Digitized by Google

dignity to the traveller. But he must have a stouter heart than mine, who can contemplate without horror the situation of a vessel of an inferior description caught among these headlands and reefs of rocks, in the long and dark winter nights of these regions. Accordingly, wrecks are frequent. It is proposed to have a light on Sumburgh-head, which is the first land made by vessels coming from the eastward; Fitful-head is higher, but is to the west, from which quarter few vessels come.

"We are now clear of Zetland, and about ten o'clock reach the Fair Isle;* one of their boats comes off, a strange-looking thing without an entire plank in it, excepting one on each side, upon the strength of which the whole depends, the rest being patched and joined. This trumpery skiff the men manage with the most astonishing dexterity, and row with remarkable speed; they have two banks, that is, two rowers on each bench, and use very short paddles. The wildness of their appearance, with long elf-locks, striped worsted caps, and shoes of raw hide—the fragility of their boat—and their extreme curiosity about us and our cutter, give them a title to be distinguished as *natives*. One of our people told their steersman, by way of jeer, that he

* This is a solitary island, lying about half-way between Orkney and Zetland.

Digitized by Google

must have great confidence in Providence to go to sea in such a vehicle; the man very sensibly replied, that without the same confidence he would not go to sea in the best *tool* in England. We take to our boat, and row for about three miles round the coast, in order to land at the inhabited part of the island. This coast abounds with grand views of rocks and bays. One immense portion of rock is (like the Holm of Noss) separated by a chasm from the mainland. As it is covered with herbage on the top, though a literal precipice all round, the natives contrive to ascend the rock by a place which would make a goat dizzy, and then drag the sheep up by ropes, though they sometimes carry a sheep up on their shoulders. The captain of a sloop of war, being ashore while they were at this work, turned giddy and sick while looking at them. This immense precipice is several hundred feet high, and is perforated below by some extraordinary apertures, through which a boat might pass; the light shines distinctly through these hideous chasms.

"After passing a square bay called the Northhaven, tenanted by sea-fowl and seals (the first we have yet seen), we come in view of the small harbour Land, and breakfast, for which, till now, none of us felt inclination. In front of the little harbour is the house of the tacksman, Mr Strong, and in view are three small assemblages of miserable huts, where the

Digitized by Google

inhabitants of the isle live. There are about thirty families and 250 inhabitants upon the *Fair Isle*. It merits its name, as the plain upon which the hamlets are situated, bears excellent barley, oats, and potatoes, and the rest of the isle is beautiful pasture, excepting to the eastward, where there is a moss, equally essential to the comfort of the inhabitants, since it supplies them with peats for fuel. The Fair Isle is about three miles long and a mile and a half broad. Mr Strong received us very courteously. He lives here, like Robinson Crusoe, in absolute solitude as to society, unless by a chance visit from the officers of a man-of-war. There is a signal-post maintained on the island by Government, under this gentleman's inspection; when any ship appears that cannot answer his signals, he sends off to Lerwick and Kirkwall to give the alarm. Rogers* was off here last year, and nearly cut off one of Mr Strong's express-boats, but the active islanders outstripped his people by speed of rowing. The inhabitants pay Mr Strong for the possessions which they occupy under him as sub-tenants, and cultivate the isle in their own way, *i. e.* by digging instead of ploughing (though the ground is quite open and free from rocks, and they have several scores of ponies), and by raising alternate crops of barley, oats, and potatoes; the first and

* An American Commodore.

Digitized by Google

last are admirably good. They rather over-manure their crops; the possessions lie runrig, that is, by alternate ridges, and the outfield or pasture ground is possessed as common to all their cows and ponies. The islanders fish for Mr Strong at certain fixed rates, and the fish is his property, which he sends to Kirkwall, Lerwick, or elsewhere, in a little schooner, the same which we left in Quendal bay, and about the arrival of which we found them anxious. An equal space of rich land on the Fair Isle, situated in an inland county of Scotland, would rent for £3000 a-year at the very least. To be sure it would not be burdened with the population of 250 souls, whose bodies (fertile as it is) it cannot maintain in bread, they being supplied chiefly from the mainland. Fish they have plenty, and are even nice in their choice. Skate they will not touch; dog-fish they say is only food for Orkney-men, and when they catch them, they make a point of tormenting the poor fish for eating off their baits from the hook, stealing the haddocks from their lines, and other enormities. These people, being about half-way between Shetland and Orkney, have unfrequent connexion with either archipelago, and live and marry entirely among themselves. One lad told me, only five persons had left the island since his remembrance, and of those, three were pressed for the navy. They seldom go to Greenland; but this year five or six of their young

Digitized by Google

men were on board the whalers. They seemed extremely solicitous about their return, and repeatedly questioned us about the names of the whalers which were at Lerwick, a point on which we could give little information.

"The manners of these islanders seem primitive and simple, and they are sober, good-humoured, and friendly — but *jimp* honest. Their comforts are, of course, much dependent on *their master's* pleasure; for so they call Mr Strong. But they gave him the highest character for kindness and liberality, and prayed to God he might long be their ruler. After mounting the signal-post hill, or Malcolm's Head. which is faced by a most tremendous cliff, we separated on our different routes. The Sheriff went to rectify the only enormity on the island, which existed in the person of a drunken schoolmaster; Marchie* went to shoot sea-fowl, or rather to frighten them, as his calumniators allege. Stevenson and Duff went to inspect the remains or vestiges of a Danish lighthouse upon a distant hill, called, as usual, the Ward, or Ward-hill, and returned with specimens of copper ore. Hamilton went down to cater fish for our dinner, and see it properly cooked — and I to see two remarkable indentures in the coast called *Rivas*, perhaps from their being rifted or *riven*.

* Mr Marjoribanks.

Digitized by Google

They are exactly like the Buller of Buchan, the sea rolling into a large open basin within the land through a natural archway. These places are close to each other — one is oblong, and it is easy to descend into it by a rude path; the other gulf is inaccessible from the land, unless to a *crags-man*, as these venturous climbers call themselves. I sat for about an hour upon the verge, like the cormorants around me, hanging my legs over the precipice; but I could not get free of two or three well-meaning islanders, who held me fast by the skirts all the time — for it must be conceived, that our numbers and appointments had drawn out the whole population to admire and attend us. After we separated, each, like the nucleus of a comet, had his own distinct train of attendants. — Visit the capital town, a wretched assemblage of the basest huts, dirty without, and still dirtier within; pigs, fowls, cows, men, women, and children, all living promiscuously under the same roof, and in the same room — the brood-sow making (among the more opulent) a distinguished inhabitant of the mansion. The compost, a liquid mass of utter abomination, is kept in a square pond of seven feet deep; when I censured it, they allowed it might be dangerous to the *bairns;* but appeared unconscious of any other objection. I cannot wonder they want meal, for assuredly they waste it. A great *bowie* or wooden vessel of por-

Digitized by Google

ridge is made in the morning; a child comes and sups a few spoonfuls; then Mrs Sow takes her share; then the rest of the children or the parents, and all at pleasure; then come the poultry when the mess is more cool; the rest is flung upon the dunghill — and the goodwife wonders and complains when she wants meal in winter. They are a long-lived race, notwithstanding utter and inconceivable dirt and sluttery. A man of sixty told me his father died only last year, aged ninety-eight; nor was this considered as very unusual.

"The clergyman of Dunrossness, in Zetland, visits these poor people once a-year, for a week or two during summer. In winter this is impossible, and even the summer visit is occasionally interrupted for two years. Marriages and baptisms are performed, as one of the Isles-men told me, *by the slump*, and one of the children was old enough to tell the clergyman who sprinkled him with water, 'Deil be in your fingers.' Last time, four couple were married; sixteen children baptised. The schoolmaster reads a portion of Scripture in the church each Sunday, when the clergyman is absent; but the present man is unfit for this part of his duty. The women knit worsted stockings, night-caps, and similar trifles, which they exchange with any merchant vessels that approach their lonely isle. In these respects they greatly regret the American war; and mention with

Digitized by Google

unction the happy days when they could get from an American trader a bottle of peach-brandy or rum in exchange for a pair of worsted-stockings or a dozen of eggs. The humanity of their *master* interferes much with the favourite but dangerous occupation of the islanders, which is *fowling*, that is, taking the young sea-fowl from their nests among these tremendous crags. About a fortnight before we arrived, a fine boy of fourteen had dropped from the cliff, while in prosecution of this amusement, into a roaring surf, by which he was instantly swallowed up. The unfortunate mother was labouring at the peat-moss at a little distance. These accidents do not, however, strike terror into the survivors. They regard the death of an individual engaged in these desperate exploits, as we do the fate of a brave relation who falls in battle, when the honour of his death furnishes a balm to our sorrow. It therefore requires all the tacksman's authority to prevent a practice so pregnant with danger. Like all other precarious and dangerous employments, the occupation of the crags-men renders them unwilling to labour at employments of a more steady description. The Fair Isle inhabitants are a good-looking race, more like Zetlanders than Orkneymen. Evenson, and other names of a Norwegian or Danish derivation, attest their Scandinavian descent. Return and dine at Mr Strong's, having sent our cookery ashore, not to overburthen

Digitized by Google

his hospitality. In this place, and perhaps in the very cottage now inhabited by Mr Strong, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, Commander-in-Chief of the Invincible Armada, wintered, after losing his vessel to the eastward of the island. It was not till he had spent some weeks in this miserable abode, that he got off to Norway. Independently of the moral consideration, that, from the pitch of power in which he stood a few days before, the proudest peer of the proudest nation in Europe found himself dependent on the jealous and scanty charity of these secluded islanders, it is scarce possible not to reflect with compassion on the change of situation from the palaces of Estramadura to the hamlet of the Fair Isle—

> 'Dost thou wish for thy deserts, O Son of Hodeirah?
> Dost thou long for the gales of Arabia?' *

"Mr Strong gave me a curious old chair belonging to Quendale, a former proprietor of the Fair Isle, and which a more zealous antiquary would have dubbed 'the Duke's chair.' I will have it refitted for Abbotsford, however. About eight o'clock we take boat, amid the cheers of the inhabitants, whose minds, subdued by our splendour, had been secured by our munificence, which consisted in a moderate

* Thalaba, Book VIII.

Digitized by Google

benefaction of whisky and tobacco, and a few shillings laid out on their staple commodities. They agreed no such day had been seen in the isle. The signal-post displayed its flags, and to recompense these distinguished marks of honour, we hung out our colours, stood into the bay, and saluted with three guns,

'Echoing from a thousand caves,'

and then bear away for Orkney, leaving, if our vanity does not deceive us, a very favourable impression on the mind of the inhabitants of the Fair Isle. The tradition of the Fair Isle is unfavourable to those shipwrecked strangers, who are said to have committed several acts of violence to extort the supplies of provision, given them sparingly and with reluctance by the islanders, who were probably themselves very far from being well supplied.

"I omitted to say we were attended in the morning by two very sportive whales, but of a kind, as some of our crew who had been on board Greenland-men assured us, which it was very dangerous to attack. There were two Gravesend smacks fishing off the isle. Lord, what a long draught London makes!

"11*th August* 1814.—After a sound sleep to make amends for last night, we find, at awaking, the vessel off the Start of Sanda, the first land in the

Digitized by Google

Orkneys which we could make. There a light-house has been erected lately upon the best construction. Landed and surveyed it. All in excellent order, and the establishment of the keepers in the same style of comfort and respectability as elsewhere, far better than the house of the master of the Fair Isle, and rivalling my own baronial mansion of Abbotsford. Go to the top of the tower and survey the island, which, as the name implies, is level, flat, and sandy, quite the reverse of those in Zetland: it is intersected by creeks and small lakes, and, though it abounds with shell marle, seems barren. There is one dreadful inconvenience of an island life, of which we had here an instance. The keeper's wife had an infant in her arms—her first-born, too, of which the poor woman had been delivered without assistance. Erskine told us of a horrid instance of malice which had been practised in this island of Sanda. A decent tenant, during the course of three or four successive years, lost to the number of twenty-five cattle, stabbed as they lay in their fold by some abominable wretch. What made the matter stranger was, that the poor man could not recollect any reason why he should have had the ill-will of a single being, only that in taking up names for the *militia*, a duty imposed upon him by the Justices, he thought he might possibly have given

Digitized by Google

some unknown offence. The villain was never discovered.

"The wrecks on this coast were numerous before the erection of the lighthouse. It was not uncommon to see five or six vessels on shore at once. The goods and chattels of the inhabitants are all said to savour of *Flotsome* and *Jetsome*, as the floating wreck and that which is driven ashore are severally called. Mr Stevenson happened to observe that the boat of a Sanda farmer had bad sails — 'If it had been His (*i. e.* God's) will that you hadna built sae many lighthouses hereabout' — answered the Orcadian, with great composure — 'I would have had new sails last winter.' Thus do they talk and think upon these subjects; and so talking and thinking, I fear the poor mariner has little chance of any very anxious attempt to assist him. There is one wreck, a Danish vessel, now aground under our lee. These Danes are the stupidest seamen, by all accounts, that sail the sea. When this light upon the Start of Sanda was established, the Commissioners, with laudable anxiety to extend its utility, had its description and bearings translated into Danish and sent to Copenhagen. But they never attend to such trifles. The Norwegians are much better liked, as a clever, hardy, sensible people. I forgot to notice there was a Norwegian prize lying in the

Digitized by Google

Sound of Lerwick, sent in by one of our cruisers. This was a queer-looking, half-decked vessel, all tattered and torn, and shaken to pieces, looking like Coleridge's Spectre Ship. It was pitiable to see such a prize. Our servants went aboard, and got one of their loaves, and gave a dreadful account of its composition. I got and cut a crust of it; it was rye-bread, with a slight mixture of pine-fir bark or sawings of deal. It was not good, but (as Charles XII. said) might be eaten. But after all, if the people can be satisfied with such bread as this, it seems hard to interdict it to them. What would a Londoner say if, instead of his roll and muffins, this black bread, relishing of tar and turpentine, were presented for his breakfast? I would to God there could be a Jehovah-jireh, 'a ram caught in the thicket,' to prevent the sacrifice of that people.

"The few friends who may see this Journal are much indebted for these pathetic remarks to the situation under which they are recorded; for since we left the lighthouse we have been struggling with adverse wind (pretty high too), and a very strong tide, called the Rost of the Start, which, like Sumburgh Rost, bodes no good to our roast and boiled. The worst is that this struggle carries us past a most curious spectacle, being no less than the carcasses of two hundred and sixty-five whales, which have been driven ashore in Taftsness bay, now lying close under

Digitized by Google

us. With all the inclination in the world, it is impossible to stand in close enough to verify this massacre of Leviathans with our own eyes, as we do not care to run the risk of being drawn ashore ourselves among the party. In fact, this species of spectacle has been of late years very common among the isles. Mr Stevenson saw upwards of a hundred and fifty whales lying upon the shore in a bay at Unst, in his northward trip. They are not large, but are decided whales, measuring perhaps from fifteen to twenty-five feet. They are easily mastered, for the first that is wounded among the sounds and straits so common in the isles, usually runs ashore. The rest follow the blood, and, urged on by the boats behind, run ashore also. A cut with one of the long whaling knives under the back-fin is usually fatal to these huge animals. The two hundred and sixty-five whales, now lying within two or three miles of us, were driven ashore by seven boats only.

"*Five o'clock.*—We are out of the *Rost* (I detest that word), and driving fast through a long sound among low green islands, which hardly lift themselves above the sea—not a cliff or hill to be seen—what a contrast to the land we have left! We are standing for some creek or harbour, called Lingholm-bay, to lie to or anchor for the night; for to pursue our course by night, and that a thick one, among these isles, and islets, and sandbanks, is out of the

Digitized by Google

question—clear moonlight might do. Our sea is now moderate. But, oh gods and men! what misfortunes have travellers to record! Just as the quiet of the elements had reconciled us to the thought of dinner, we learn that an unlucky sea has found its way into the galley during the last infernal combustion, when the lee-side and bolt-sprit were constantly under water; so our soup is poisoned with salt water—our cod and haddocks, which cost ninepence this blessed morning, and would have been worth a couple of guineas in London, are soused in their primitive element—the curry is undone—and all gone to the devil. We all apply ourselves to comfort our Lord High Admiral Hamilton, whose despair for himself and the public might edify a patriot. His good-humour—which has hitherto defied every incident, aggravated even by the gout—supported by a few bad puns, and a great many fair promises on the part of the steward and cook, fortunately restores his equilibrium.

"*Eight o'clock.*—Our supplemental dinner proved excellent, and we have glided into an admirable road-stead or harbour, called Lingholm-bay, formed by the small island of Lingholm embracing a small basin dividing that islet from the larger isle of Stronsay. Both, as well as Sanda, Eda, and others which we have passed, are low, green, and sandy. I have seen nothing to-day worth marking, except the sporting

Digitized by Google

of a very large whale at some distance, and H.'s face at the news of the disaster in the cook-room. We are to weigh at two in the morning, and hope to reach Kirkwall, the capital of Orkney, by breakfast to-morrow. I trust there are no *rusts* or *rosts* in the road. I shall detest that word even when used to signify verd-antique or patina in the one sense, or roast venison in the other. Orkney shall begin a new volume of these exquisite memoranda.

"OMISSION.—At Lerwick the Dutch fishers had again appeared on their old haunts. A very interesting meeting took place between them and the Lerwegians, most of them being old acquaintances. They seemed very poor, and talked of having been pillaged of everything by the French, and expected to have found Lerwick ruined by the war. They have all the careful, quiet, and economical habits of their country, and go on board their busses with the utmost haste so soon as they see the Greenland sailors, who usually insult and pick quarrels with them. The great amusement of the Dutch sailors is to hire the little ponies, and ride up and down upon them. On one occasion, a good many years ago, an English sailor interrupted this cavalcade, frightened the horses, and one or two Dutchmen got tumbles. Incensed at this beyond their usual moderation, they pursued the cause of their overthrow, and wounded

Digitized by Google

him with one of their knives. The wounded man went on board his vessel, the crew of which, about fifty strong, came ashore with their long flinching knives with which they cut up the whales, and falling upon the Dutchmen, though twice their numbers, drove them all into the sea, where such as could not swim were in some risk of being drowned. The instance of aggression, or rather violent retaliation, on their part, is almost solitary. In general they are extremely quiet, and employ themselves in bartering their little merchandise of gin and gingerbread for Zetland hose and night-caps."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIX.

Diary on Board the Lighthouse Yacht continued—The Orkneys—Kirkwall—Hoy—The Standing Stones of Stennis, &c.

AUGUST 1814.

"**12th *August*** 1814.—With a good breeze and calm sea we weighed at two in the morning, and worked by short tacks up to Kirkwall bay, and find ourselves in that fine basin upon rising in the morning. The town looks well from the sea, but is chiefly indebted to the huge old cathedral that rises out of the centre. Upon landing we find it but a poor and dirty place, especially towards the harbour. Farther up the town are seen some decent old-fashioned houses, and the Sheriff's interest secures us good lodgings. Marchie goes to hunt for a pointer. The morning, which was rainy, clears up pleasantly, and Hamilton, Erskine, Duff, and I, walk to Malcolm Laing's, who has a pleasant house about half-a-mile

Digitized by Google

from the town. Our old acquaintance, though an invalid, received us kindly; he looks very poorly, and cannot walk without assistance, but seems to retain all the quick, earnest, and vivacious intelligence of his character and manner. After this visit the antiquities of the place, viz. the Bishop's palace, the Earl of Orkney's castle, and the cathedral, all situated within a stone-cast of each other. The two former are ruinous. The most prominent part of the ruins of the Bishop's palace is a large round tower, similar to that of Bothwell in architecture, but not equal to it in size. This was built by Bishop Reid, *tempore Jacobi V.*, and there is a rude statue of him in a niche in the front. At the north-east corner of the building is a square tower of greater antiquity, called the Mense or Mass Tower; but, as well as a second and smaller round tower, it is quite ruinous. A suite of apartments of different sizes fills up the space between these towers, all now ruinous. The building is said to have been of great antiquity, but was certainly in a great measure re-edified in the sixteenth century.

"Fronting this castle or palace of the Bishop, and about a gun-shot distant, is that of the Earl of Orkney. The Earl's palace was built by Patrick Stewart, Earl of Orkney, the same who erected that of Scalloway, in Shetland. It is an elegant structure, partaking at once of the character of a

Digitized by Google

palace and castle. The building forms three sides of an oblong square, but one of the sides extends considerably beyond the others. The great hall must have been remarkably handsome, opening into two or three huge rounds or turrets, the lower part of which is divided by stone shafts into three windows. It has two immense chimneys, the arches or lintels of which are formed by a flat arch, as at Crichton Castle. There is another very handsome apartment communicating with the hall like a modern drawing-room, and which has, like the former, its projecting turrets. The hall is lighted by a fine Gothic-shafted window at one end, and by others on the sides. It is approached by a spacious and elegant staircase of three flights of steps. The dimensions may be sixty feet long, twenty broad, and fourteen high, but doubtless an arched roof sprung from the side walls, so that fourteen feet was only the height from the ground to the arches. Any modern architect, wishing to emulate the real Gothic architecture, and apply it to the purposes of modern splendour, might derive excellent hints from this room. The exterior ornaments are also extremely elegant. The ruins, once the residence of this haughty and oppressive Earl, are now so disgustingly nasty, that it required all the zeal of an antiquary to prosecute the above investigation. Architecture seems to have been Earl Patrick's prevailing taste. Besides this

Digitized by Google

castle and that of Scalloway, he added to or enlarged the old castle of Bressay. To accomplish these objects, he oppressed the people with severities unheard-of even in that oppressive age, drew down on himself a shameful though deserved punishment, and left these dishonoured ruins to hand down to posterity the tale of his crimes and of his fall. We may adopt, though in another sense, his own presumptuous motto—*Sic Fuit, Est, et Erit.*

"We visit the cathedral, dedicated to St Magnus, which greeted the Sheriff's approach with a merry peal. Like that of Glasgow, this church has escaped the blind fury of Reformation. It was founded in 1138, by Ronald, Earl of Orkney, nephew of the Saint. It is of great size, being 260 feet long, or thereabout, and supported by twenty-eight Saxon pillars, of good workmanship. The round arch predominates in the building, but I think not exclusively. The steeple (once a very high spire) rises upon four pillars of great strength, which occupy each angle of the nave. Being destroyed by lightning, it was rebuilt upon a low and curtailed plan. The appearance of the building is rather massive and gloomy than elegant, and many of the exterior ornaments, carving around the door-ways, &c., have been injured by time. We entered the cathedral, the whole of which is kept locked, swept, and in good order. although only the eastern end is used for divine

Digitized by Google

worship. We walked some time in the nave and western end, which is left unoccupied, and has a very solemn effect as the avenue to the place of worship. There were many tombstones on the floor and elsewhere; some, doubtless, of high antiquity. One, I remarked, had the shield of arms hung by the corner, with a helmet above it of a large proportion, such as I have seen on the most ancient seals. But we had neither time nor skill to decipher what noble Orcadian lay beneath. The church is as well fitted up as could be expected; much of the old carved oak remains, but with a motley mixture of modern deal pews. All, however, is neat and clean, and does great honour to the kirk-session who maintain its decency. I remarked particularly Earl Patrick's seat, adjoining to that of the magistrates, but surmounting it and every other in the church; it is surrounded with a carved screen of oak, rather elegant, and bears his arms and initials, and the motto I have noticed. He bears the royal arms *without any mark of bastardy* (his father was a natural son of James V.) quarterly, with a lymphad or galley, the ancient arms of the county. This circumstance was charged against him on his trial.* I understand the

* "This noted oppressor was finally brought to trial, and beheaded at the Cross of Edinburgh [6th February 1614.] It is said that the King's mood was considerably heated against him by some ill-chosen and worse written Latin inscriptions with

Digitized by Google

late Mr Gilbert Laing Meason left the interest of £1000 to keep up this cathedral.

" There are in the street facing the cathedral the ruins of a much more ancient castle; a proper feudal fortress belonging to the Earls of Orkney, but called the King's Castle. It appears to have been very strong, being situated near the harbour, and having, as appears from the fragments, very massive walls. While the wicked Earl Patrick was in confinement, one of his natural sons defended this castle to extremity against the King's troops, and only surrendered when it was nearly a heap of ruins, and then under condition he should not be brought in evidence against his father.

" We dine at the inn, and drink the Prince Regent's health, being that of the day — Mr Baikie of Tankerness dines with us.

" 13*th August* 1814.—A bad morning, but clears up. No letters from Edinburgh. The country about

---

which his father and himself had been unlucky enough to decorate some of their insular palaces. In one of these, Earl Robert, the father, had given his own designation thus: — 'Orcadiæ Comes *Rex* Jacobi Quinti Filius.' In this case he was not, perhaps, guilty of anything worse than bad Latin. But James VI., who had a keen nose for puzzling out treason, and with whom an assault and battery upon Priscian ranked in nearly the same degree of crime, had little doubt that the use of the nominative *Rex*, instead of the genitive *Regis*, had a treasonable savour."— Scott's *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol xxiii. p. 232.

Digitized by Google

Kirkwall is flat, and tolerably cultivated. We see oxen generally wrought in the small country carts, though they have a race of ponies, like those of Shetland, but larger. Marchie goes to shoot on a hill called Whiteford, which slopes away about two or three miles from Kirkwall. The grouse is abundant, for the gentleman who chaperons Marchie killed thirteen brace and a half, with a snipe. There are no partridges nor hares. The soil of Orkney is better, and its air more genial than Shetland; but it is far less interesting, and possesses none of the wild and peculiar character of the more northern archipelago. All vegetables grow here freely in the gar dens, and there are one or two attempts at trees where they are sheltered by walls. How ill they succeed may be conjectured from our bringing with us a quantity of brushwood, commissioned by Malcolm Laing from Aberbrothock, to be sticks to his pease. This trash we brought two hundred miles. I have little to add, except that the Orkney people have some odd superstitions about a stone on which they take oaths to Odin. Lovers often perform this ceremony in pledge of mutual faith, and are said to account it a sacred engagement.—It is agreed that we go on board after dinner, and sail with the next tide. The magistrates of Kirkwall present us with the freedom of their ancient burgh; and Erskine, instead of being cumbered with drunken sailors, as at

Digitized by Google

Lerwick, or a drunken schoolmaster, as at Fair Isle, is annoyed by his own Substitute. This will occasion his remaining two days at Kirkwall, during which time it is proposed we shall visit the lighthouse upon the dangerous rocks called the Skerries, in the Pentland Frith; and then, returning to the eastern side of Pomona, take up the counsellor at Stromness. It is further settled that we leave Marchie with Erskine to get another day's shooting. On board at ten o'clock, after a little bustle in expediting our domestics, washerwomen, &c.

"14*th August* 1814.—Sail about four, and in rounding the mainland of Orkney, called Pomona, encounter a very heavy sea; about ten o'clock, get into the Sound of Holm or Ham, a fine smooth current meandering away between two low green islands, which have little to characterise them. On the right of the Sound is the mainland, and a deep bay called Scalpa Flow indents it up to within two miles of Kirkwall. A canal through this neck of the island would be of great consequence to the burgh. We see the steeple and church of Kirkwall across the island very distinctly. Getting out of the Sound of Holm, we stand in to the harbour or roadstead of Widewall, where we find seven or eight foreign vessels bound for Ireland, and a sloop belonging to the lighthouse service. These roadsteads are common all through the Orkneys, and afford excellent shelter

Digitized by Google

for small vessels. The day is pleasant and sunny, but the breeze is too high to permit landing at the Skerries. Agree, therefore, to stand over for the mainland of Scotland, and visit Thurso. Enter the Pentland Frith, so celebrated for the strength and fury of its tides, which is boiling even in this pleasant weather; we see a large ship battling with this heavy current, and though with all her canvass set and a breeze, getting more and more involved. See the two Capes of Dungsby or Duncansby, and Dunnet-head, between which lies the celebrated John o'Groat's house, on the north-eastern extremity of Scotland. The shores of Caithness rise bold and rocky before us, a contrast to the Orkneys, which are all low, excepting the Island of Hoy. On Duncansby-head appear some remarkable rocks, like towers, called the Stacks of Duncansby. Near this shore runs the remarkable breaking tide called the *Merry Men of Mey*, whence Mackenzie takes the scenery of a poem—

> 'Where the dancing Men of Mey,
> Speed the current to the land.'*

Here, according to his locality, the Caithness man witnessed the vision, in which was introduced the

* Henry Mackenzie's Introduction to "The Fatal Sisters."—Works, 1808, vol. viii. p. 63.

Digitized by Google

song translated by Gray, under the title of the Fatal Sisters. On this subject, Mr Baikie me the following remarkable circumstance: — A clergyman told him, that while some remnants of the Norse were yet spoken in North Ronaldsha, he carried thither the translation of Mr Gray, then newly published, and read it to some of the old people as referring to the ancient history of their islands. But so soon as he had proceeded a little way, they exclaimed they knew it very well in the original, and had often sung it to himself when he asked them for an old Norse song; they called it *The Enchantresses.* — The breeze dies away between two wicked little islands called Swona and Stroma, the latter belonging to Caithness, the former to Orkney. — *Nota Bene.* The inhabitants of the rest of the Orcades despise those of Swona for eating limpets, as being the last of human meannesses. Every land has its fashions. The Fair-Islesmen disdain Orkney-men for eating dog-fish. Both islands have dangerous reefs and whirlpools, where, even, in this fine day, the tide rages furiously. Indeed, the large high unbroken billows, which at every swell hide from our deck each distant object, plainly intimate what a dreadful current this must be when vexed by high or adverse winds. Finding ourselves losing ground in the tide, and unwilling to waste time, we give up Thurso — run back into the roadstead or bay of Long-Hope,

Digitized by Google

and anchor under the fort. The bay has four entrances and safe anchorage in most winds, and having become a great rendezvous for shipping (there are nine vessels lying here at present), has been an object of attention with Government.

"Went ashore after dinner, and visited the fort, which is only partly completed; it is a *flêche* to the sea, with eight guns, twenty-four pounders, but without any land defences; the guns are mounted *en barbette*, without embrasures, each upon a kind of moveable stage, which stage wheeling upon a pivot in front, and traversing by means of wheels behind, can be pointed in any direction that may be thought necessary. Upon this stage, the gun-carriage moves forward and recoils, and the depth of the parapet shelters the men even better than an embrasure; at a little distance from this battery they are building a Martello tower, which is to cross the fire of the battery, and also that of another projected tower upon the opposite point of the bay. The expedience of these towers seems excessively problematical. Supposing them impregnable, or nearly so, a garrison of fourteen or fifteen men may be always blockaded by a very trifling number, while the enemy dispose of all in the vicinity at their pleasure. In the case of Long-Hope, for instance, a frigate might disembark 100 men, take the fort in the rear, where it is undefended even by a palisade, destroy the magazines,

Digitized by Google

spike and dismount the cannon, carry off or cut out any vessels in the roadstead, and accomplish all the purposes that could bring them to so remote a spot, in spite of a serjeant's party in the Martello tower, and without troubling themselves about them at all. Meanwhile, Long-Hope will one day turn out a flourishing place; there will soon be taverns and slop-shops, where sailors rendezvous in such numbers; then will come quays, docks, and warehouses; and then a thriving town. Amen, so be it. This is the first fine day we have enjoyed to an end since Sunday, 31st ult. Rainy, cold, and hazy, have been our voyages around these wild islands; I hope the weather begins to mend, though Mr Wilson, our master, threatens a breeze to-morrow. We are to attempt the Skerries, if possible; if not, we will, I believe, go to Stromness.

"15*th August* 1814.—Fine morning; we get again into the Pentland Frith, and with the aid of a pilot-boat belonging to the lighthouse service, from South Ronaldsha, we attempt the Skerries. Notwithstanding the fair weather, we have a specimen of the violence of the flood-tide, which forms whirlpools on the shallow sunken rocks by the islands of Swona and Stroma, and in the deep water makes strange, smooth, whirling, and swelling eddies, called by the sailors, *wells*. We run through the *wells of Tuftile* in particular, which, in the least stress of weather,

Digitized by Google

wheel a large ship round and round, without respect either to helm or sails. Hence the distinction of *wells* and *waves* in old English; the *well* being that smooth, glassy, oily-looking eddy, the force of which seems to the eye almost resistless. The bursting of the waves in foam around these strange eddies has a bewildering and confused appearance, which it is impossible to describe. Get off the Skerries about ten o'clock, and land easily; it is the first time a boat has got there for several days. The *Skerries** is an island about sixty acres, of fine short herbage, belonging to Lord Dundas; it is surrounded by a reef of precipitous rocks, not very high, but inaccessible, unless where the ocean has made ravines among them, and where stairs have been cut down to the water for the lighthouse service. Those inlets have a romantic appearance, and have been christened by the sailors, the Parliament House, the Seals' Lying-in-Hospital, &c. The last inlet, after rushing through a deep chasm, which is open overhead, is continued under ground, and then again opens to the sky in the middle of the island: in this hole the seals bring out their whelps; when the tide is high, the waves rise up through this aperture in the middle of the isle—like the blowing of a whale in noise and appearance. There is another round cauldron of solid

* "A Skerrie means a flattish rock which the sea does not overflow."—*Edmondstone's View of the Zetlands.*

Digitized by Google

rock, to which the waves have access through a natural arch in the rock, having another and lesser arch rising just above it; in hard weather, the waves rush through both apertures with a horrid noise; the workmen called it the Carron Blast, and indeed, the variety of noises which issued from the abyss, somewhat reminded me of that engine. Take my rifle, and walk round the cliffs in search of seals, but see none, and only disturb the digestion of certain alder-men-cormorants, who were sitting on the points of the crags after a good fish breakfast; only made one good shot out of four. The lighthouse is too low, and on the old construction, yet it is of the last importance. The keeper is an old man-of-war's-man, of whom Mr Stevenson observed that he was a great swearer when he first came; but after a year or two's residence in this solitary abode, became a changed man. There are about fifty head of cattle on the island; they must be got in and off with great danger and difficulty. There is no water upon the isle, except what remains after rain in some pools; these sometimes dry in summer, and the cattle are reduced to great straits. Leave the isle about one; and the wind and tide being favourable, crowd all sail, and get on at the rate of fourteen miles an hour. Soon reach our old anchorage at the Long-Hope, and passing, stand to the north-westward, up the sound of Hoy, for Stromness.

Digitized by Google

"I should have mentioned, that in going down the Pentland Frith this morning, we saw Johnnie Groat's house, or rather the place where it stood, now occupied by a storehouse. Our pilot opines there was no such man as Johnnie Groat, for, he says, he cannot hear that anybody *ever saw him.* This reasoning would put down most facts of antiquity. They gather shells on the shore, called *Johnnie Groat's buckies*, but I cannot procure any at present. I may also add, that the interpretation given to *wells* may apply to the *Wells of Slain*, in the fine ballad of Clerk Colvill; such eddies in the romantic vicinity of Slains Castle would be a fine place for a mermaid.*

"Our wind fails us, and what is worse, becomes westerly; the Sound has now the appearance of a fine land-locked bay, the passages between the several islands being scarce visible. We have a superb view of Kirkwall Cathedral, with a strong gleam of sunshine upon it. Gloomy weather begins to collect

* Clerk Colvill falls a sacrifice to a meeting with "a fair Mermaid," whom he found washing her "Sark of Silk" on this romantic shore. He had been warned by his "gay lady" in these words:—

"O promise me now, Clerk Colvill,
Or it will cost ye muckle strife,
Ride never by the Wells of Slane,
If ye wad live and brook your life"

Digitized by Google

around us, particularly on the island of Hoy, which, covered with gloom and vapour, now assumes a majestic mountainous character. On Pomona we pass the Hill of Orphir, which reminds me of the clergyman of that parish, who was called to account for some of his inaccuracies to the General Assembly; one charge he held particularly cheap, viz., that of drunkenness. 'Reverend Moderator,' said he, in reply, 'I *do* drink, as other gentlemen do.' This Orphir of the north must not be confounded with the Ophir of the south. From the latter came gold, silver, and precious stones; the former seems to produce little except peats. Yet these are precious commodities, which some of the Orkney Isles altogether want, and lay waste and burn the turf of their land instead of importing coal from Newcastle. The Orcadians seem by no means an alert or active race; they neglect the excellent fisheries which lie under their very noses, and in their mode of managing their boats, as well as in the general tone of urbanity and intelligence, are excelled by the less favoured Zetlanders. I observe they always crowd their boat with people in the bows, being the ready way to send her down in any awkward circumstance. There are remains of their Norwegian descent and language in North Ronaldsha, an isle I regret we did not see. A missionary preacher came ashore there a year or two since, but being a very little black-

Digitized by Google

bearded unshaved man, the seniors of the isle suspected him of being an ancient Pecht or Pict, and *no canny*, of course. The schoolmaster came down to entreat our worthy Mr Stevenson, then about to leave the island, to come up and verify whether the preacher was an ancient Pecht, yea or no. Finding apologies were in vain, he rode up to the house where the unfortunate preacher, after three nights' watching, had got to bed, little conceiving under what odious suspicion he had fallen. As Mr S. declined disturbing him, his boots were produced, which being a *little — little — very little* pair, confirmed, in the opinion of all the bystanders, the suspicion of Pechtism. Mr S. therefore found it necessary to go into the poor man's sleeping apartment, where he recognised one Campbell, heretofore an ironmonger in Edinburgh, but who had put his hand for some years to the missionary plough; of course he warranted his quondam acquaintance to be no ancient Pecht. Mr Stevenson carried the same schoolmaster who figured in the adventure of the Pecht, to the mainland of Scotland, to be examined for his office. He was extremely desirous to see a tree; and, on seeing one, desired to know what *girss* it was that grew at the top on't — the leaves appearing to him to be grass. They still speak a little Norse, and indeed I hear every day words of that language; for instance, *Ja*, *kul*, for '*Yes, sir.*' We

Digitized by Google

creep slowly up Hoy Sound, working under the Pomona shore; but there is no hope of reaching Stromness till we have the assistance of the evening tide. The channel now seems like a Highland loch; not the least ripple on the waves. The passage is narrowed, and (to the eye) blocked up by the interposition of the green and apparently fertile isle of Græmsay, the property of Lord Armadale.* Hoy looks yet grander, from comparing its black and steep mountains with this verdant isle. To add to the beauty of the Sound, it is rendered lively by the successive appearance of seven or eight whaling vessels from Davies' Straits; large strong ships, which pass successively, with all their sails set, enjoying the little wind that is. Many of these vessels display the *garland;* that is, a wreath of ribbons which the young fellows on board have got from their sweethearts, or come by otherwise, and which hangs between the foremast and mainmast, surmounted sometimes by a small model of the vessel. This garland is hung up upon the 1st May, and remains till they come into port. I believe we shall dodge here till the tide makes about nine, and then get into Stromness: no boatman or sailor in Orkney thinks of the wind in comparison of the tides and currents. We must not complain, though the night

* Sir William Honeyman, Bart. — a Judge of the Court of Session by the title of Lord Armadale.

Digitized by Google

gets rainy, and the Hill of Hoy is now completely invested with vapour and mist. In the forepart of the day we executed very cleverly a task of considerable difficulty and even danger.

"16*th August* 1814.—Get into Stromness bay, and anchor before the party are up. A most decided rain all night. The bay is formed by a deep indention in the mainland, or Pomona; on one side of which stands Stromness — a fishing village and harbour of *call* for the Davies' Straits whalers, as Lerwick is for the Greenlanders. Betwixt the vessels we met yesterday, seven or eight which passed us this morning, and several others still lying in the bay, we have seen between twenty and thirty of these large ships in this remote place. The opposite side of Stromness bay is protected by Hoy, and Græmsay lies between them; so that the bay seems quite landlocked, and the contrast between the mountains of Hoy, the soft verdure of Græmsay, and the swelling hill of Orphir on the mainland, has a beautiful effect. The day clears up, and Mr Rae, Lord Armadale's factor, comes off from his house, called Clestrom, upon the shore opposite to Stromness, to breakfast with us. We go ashore with him. His farm is well cultivated, and he has procured an excellent breed of horses from Lanarkshire, of which county he is a native; strong hardy Galloways, fit for labour or hacks. By this we profited. as Mr Rae mounted

Digitized by Google

us all, and we set off to visit the Standing Stones of Stenhouse or Stennis.

"At the upper end of the bay, about half way between Clestrom and Stromness, there extends a loch of considerable size, of fresh water, but communicating with the sea by apertures left in a long bridge or causeway which divides them. After riding about two miles along this lake, we open another called the Loch of Harray, of about the same dimensions, and communicating with the lower lake, as the former does with the sea, by a stream, over which is constructed a causeway, with openings to suffer the flow and reflux of the water, as both lakes are affected by the tide. Upon the tongues of land which, approaching each other, divide the lakes of Stennis and Harray, are situated the Standing Stones. The isthmus on the eastern side exhibits a semicircle of immensely large upright pillars of unhewn stone, surrounded by a mound of earth. As the mound is discontinued, it does not seem that the circle was ever completed. The flat or open part of the semicircle looks up a plain, where, at a distance, is seen a large tumulus. The highest of these stones may be about sixteen or seventeen feet, and I think there are none so low as twelve feet. At irregular distances are pointed out other unhewn pillars of the same kind. One, a little to the westward, is perforated with a round hole, perhaps to bind a victim;

Digitized by Google

or rather, I conjecture, for the purpose of solemnly attesting the deity, which the Scandinavians did by passing their head through a ring, — *vide* Eyrbiggia Saga. Several barrows are scattered around this strange monument. Upon the opposite isthmus is a complete circle, of ninety-five paces in diameter, surrounded by standing stones, less in size than the others, being only from ten or twelve to fourteen feet in height, and four in breadth. A deep trench is drawn around this circle on the outside of the pillars, and four tumuli, or mounds of earth, are regularly placed, two on each side.

" Stonehenge excels these monuments, but I fancy they are otherwise unparalleled in Britain. The idea that such circles were exclusively Druidical is now justly exploded. The northern nations all used such erections to mark their places of meeting, whether for religious purposes or civil policy; and there is repeated mention of them in the Sagas. *See* the Eyrbiggia Saga,* for the establishment of the Helga-fels, or holy mount, where the people held their Comitia, and where sacrifices were offered to Thor and Woden. About the centre of the semi-circle is a broad flat stone, probably once the altar on which human victims were sacrificed. — Mr Rae seems to think the common people have no tradi-

* *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. v. p. 355.

Digitized by Google

tion of the purpose of these stones, but probably he has not enquired particularly. He admits they look upon them with superstitious reverence; and it is evident that those which have fallen down (about half the original number) have been wasted by time, and not demolished. The materials of these monuments lay near, for the shores and bottom of the lake are of the same kind of rock. How they were raised, transported, and placed upright, is a puzzling question. In our ride back, noticed a round entrenchment, or *tumulus*, called the Hollow of Tongue.

" The hospitality of Mrs Rae detained us to an early dinner at Clestrom. About four o'clock took our long-boat and rowed down the bay to visit the Dwarfie Stone of Hoy. We have all day been pleased with the romantic appearance of that island, for though the Hill of Hoy is not very high, perhaps about 1200 feet, yet rising perpendicularly (almost) from the sea, and being very steep and furrowed with ravines, and catching all the mists from the western ocean, it has a noble and picturesque effect in every point of view. We land upon the island, and proceed up a long and very swampy valley broken into peatbogs. The one side of this valley is formed by the Mountain of Hoy, the other by another steep hill, having at the top a circular belt of rock; upon the slope of this last hill, and

Digitized by Google

just where the principal mountain opens into a wide and precipitous and circular *corrie* or hollow, lies the Dwarfie Stone. It is a huge sandstone rock, of one solid stone, being about seven feet high, twenty-two feet long, and seventeen feet broad. The upper end of this stone is hewn into a sort of apartment containing two beds of stone and a passage between them. The uppermost and largest is five feet eight inches long, by two feet broad, and is furnished with a stone pillow. The lower, supposed for the Dwarf's Wife, is shorter, and rounded off, instead of being square at the corners. The entrance may be about three feet and a half square. Before it lies a huge stone, apparently intended to serve the purpose of a door, and shaped accordingly. In the top, over the passage which divides the beds, there is a hole to serve for a window or chimney, which was doubtless originally wrought square with irons, like the rest of the work, but has been broken out by violence into a shapeless hole. Opposite to this stone, and proceeding from it in a line down the valley, are several small barrows, and there is a very large one on the same line, at the spot where we landed. This seems to indicate that the monument is of heathen times, and probably was meant as the temple of some northern edition of the *Dii Manes*. There are no symbols of Christian devotion — and the door is to the westward; it therefore does not seem to have

Digitized by Google

been the abode of a hermit, as Dr Barry* has conjectured. The Orcadians have no tradition on the subject, excepting that they believe it to be the work of a dwarf, to whom, like their ancestors, they attribute supernatural powers and malevolent disposition. They conceive he may be seen sometimes sitting at the door of his abode, but he vanishes on a nearer approach. Whoever inhabited this den certainly enjoyed

'Pillow cold and sheets not warm.'

"Duff, Stevenson, and I, now walk along the skirts of the Hill of Hoy, to rejoin Robert Hamilton, who in the meanwhile had rode down to the clergyman's house, the wet and boggy walk not suiting his gout. Arrive at the manse completely wet, and drink tea there. The clergyman (Mr Hamilton) has procured some curious specimens of natural history for Bullock's Museum, particularly a pair of fine eaglets. He has just got another of the golden, or white kind, which he intends to send him. The eagle, with every other ravenous bird, abounds among the almost inaccessible precipices of Hoy, which afford them shelter, while the moors, abounding with grouse, and the small uninhabited islands and holms, where sheep and lambs are necessarily

* History of the Orkney Islands, by the Rev. George Barry, D.D. 4to. Edinburgh: 1805.

Digitized by Google

left unwatched, as well as the all-sustaining ocean, give these birds of prey the means of support. The clergyman told us. that a man was very lately alive in the island of , who, when an infant, was transported from thence by an eagle over a broad sound, or arm of the sea, to the bird's nest in Hoy. Pursuit being instantly made, and the eagle's nest being known, the infant was found there playing with the young eaglets. A more ludicrous instance of transportation he himself witnessed. Walking in the fields, he heard the squeaking of a pig for some time, without being able to discern whence it proceeded, until looking up, he beheld the unfortunate grunter in the talons of an eagle, who soared away with him towards the summit of Hoy. From this it may be conjectured, that the island is very thinly inhabited; in fact, we only saw two or three little wigwams. After tea we walked a mile farther, to a point where the boat was lying, in order to secure the advantage of the flood-tide. We rowed with toil across one stream of tide, which set strongly up between Græmsay and Hoy; but, on turning the point of Græmsay, the other branch of the same flood-tide carried us with great velocity alongside our yacht, which we reached about nine o'clock. Between riding, walking, and running, we have spent a very active and entertaining day.

"*Domestic Memoranda*— The eggs on Zetland

Digitized by Google

and Orkney are very indifferent, having an earthy taste, and being very small. But the hogs are an excellent breed — queer wild-looking creatures, with heads like wild-boars, but making capital bacon."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXX.

Diary continued — Stromness — Bessy Millie's Charm — Cape Wrath — Cave of Smowe — The Hebrides — Scalpa, &c.

1814.

"*Off Stromness, 17th August* 1814. — Went on shore after breakfast, and found W. Erskine and Marjoribanks had been in this town all last night, without our hearing of them or they of us. No letters from Abbotsford or Edinburgh. Stromness is a little dirty straggling town, which cannot be traversed by a cart, or even by a horse, for there are stairs up and down, even in the principal streets. We paraded its whole length like turkeys in a string, I suppose to satisfy ourselves that there was a worse town in the Orkneys than the metropolis, Kirkwall. We clomb, by steep and dirty lanes, an eminence

Digitized by Google

rising above the town, and commanding a fine view. An old hag lives in a wretched cabin on this height, and subsists by selling winds. Each captain of a merchantman, between jest and earnest, gives the old woman sixpence, and she boils her kettle to procure a favourable gale. She was a miserable figure; upwards of ninety, she told us, and dried up like a mummy. A sort of clay-coloured cloak, folded over her head, corresponded in colour to her corpselike complexion. Fine light-blue eyes, and nose and chin that almost met, and a ghastly expression of cunning, gave her quite the effect of Hecate. She told us she remembered *Gow the pirate*, who was born near the House of Clestrom, and afterwards commenced buccanier. He came to his native country about 1725, with a *snow* which he commanded, carried off two women from one of the islands, and committed other enormities. At length, while he was dining in a house in the island of Eda, the islanders, headed by Malcolm Laing's grandfather, made him prisoner, and sent him to London, where he was hanged. While at Stromness, he made love to a Miss Gordon, who pledged her faith to him by shaking hands, an engagement which, in her idea, could not be dissolved without her going to London to seek back again her 'faith and troth,' by shaking hands with him again after execution. We left our Pythoness, who assured us there was

Digitized by Google

nothing evil in the intercession she was to make for us, but that we were only to have a fair wind through the benefit of her prayers. She repeated a sort of rigmarole which I suppose she had ready for such occasions, and seemed greatly delighted and surprised with the amount of our donation, as every body gave her a trifle, our faithful Captain Wilson making the regular offering on behalf of the ship. So much for buying a wind. Bessy Millie's habitation is airy enough for Æolus himself, but if she is a special favourite with that divinity, he has a strange choice. In her house I remarked a quern, or hand-mill.—A cairn, a little higher, commands a beautiful view of the bay, with its various entrances and islets. Here we found the vestiges of a bonfire, lighted in memory of the battle of Bannockburn, concerning which every part of Scotland has its peculiar traditions. The Orcadians say that a Norwegian prince, then their ruler, called by them Harold, brought 1400 men of Orkney to the assistance of Bruce, and that the King, at a critical period of the engagement, touched him with his scabbard, saying, 'The day is against us.'—'I trust,' returned the Orcadian, 'your Grace will *venture again*;' which has given rise to their motto, and passed into a proverb. On board at half-past three, and find Bessy Millie a woman of her word, for the expected breeze has sprung up, if it but last us till we double Cape

Digitized by Google

Wrath. Weigh anchor (I hope) to bid farewell to Orkney.*

"The land in Orkney is, generally speaking, excellent, and what is not fitted for the plough, is admirably adapted for pasture. But the cultivation is very bad, and the mode of using these extensive commons, where they tear up, without remorse, the turf of the finest pasture, in order to make fuel, is absolutely execrable. The practice has already peeled and exhausted much fine land, and must in the end ruin the country entirely. In other respects, their mode of cultivation is to manure for barley and oats, and then manure again, and this without the least idea of fallow or green crops. Mr Rae thinks that his example — and he farms very well — has had no effect upon the natives, except in the article of potatoes, which they now cultivate a little more, but crops of turnips are unknown. For this slovenly labour the Orcadians cannot, like the Shetland men, plead the occupation of fishing, which is wholly neglected by them, excepting that about this time of

* Lord Teignmouth, in his recent "Sketches of the Coasts and Islands of Scotland," says — "The publication of the Pirate satisfied the natives of Orkney as to the authorship of the Waverley Novels. It was remarked by those who had accompanied Sir Walter Scott in his excursions in these Islands, that the vivid descriptions which the work contains were confined to those scenes which he visited" — Vol. i. p. 28.

Digitized by Google

the year all the people turn out for the dogfish, the liver of which affords oil, and the bodies are a food as much valued here by the lower classes as it is contemned in Shetland. We saw nineteen boats out at this work. But cod, tusk, ling, haddocks, &c., which abound round these isles, are totally neglected. Their inferiority in husbandry is therefore to be ascribed to the prejudices of the people, who are all peasants of the lowest order. On Lord Armadale's estate, the number of tenantry amounts to 300, and the average of rent is about seven pounds each. What can be expected from such a distribution? and how is the necessary restriction to take place, without the greatest immediate distress and hardship to these poor creatures? It is the hardest chapter in Economicks; and if I were an Orcadian laird, I feel I should shuffle on with the old useless creatures, in contradiction to my better judgment. Stock is improved in these islands, and the horses seem to be better bred than in Shetland; at least, I have seen more clever animals. The good horses find a ready sale; Mr Rae gets twenty guineas readily for a colt of his rearing—to be sure, they are very good.

"*Six o'Clock.*—Our breeze has carried us through the Mouth of Hoy, and so into the Atlantic. The north-western face of the island forms a ledge of high perpendicular cliffs, which might have surprised us more, had we not already seen the Ord of Bres-

Digitized by Google

say, the Noup of Noss, and the precipices of the Fair Isle. But these are formidable enough. One projecting cliff, from the peculiarities of its form, has acquired the name of the Old Man of Hoy, and is well known to mariners as marking the entrance to the Mouth. The other jaw of this mouth is formed by a lower range of crags, called the Burgh of Birsa. The access through this strait would be easy, were it not for the Island of Græmsay, lying in the very throat of the passage, and two other islands covering the entrance to the harbour of Stromness. Græmsay is infamous for shipwrecks, and the chance of these *God-sends*, as they were impiously called, is said sometimes to have doubled the value of the land. In Stromness, I saw many of the sad relics of shipwrecked vessels applied to very odd purposes, and indeed to all sorts of occasions. The gates, or *grinds*, as they are here called, are usually of ship planks and timbers, and so are their bridges, &c. These casualties are now much less common since the lights on the Skerries and the Start have been established. Enough of memoranda for the present.—We have hitherto kept our course pretty well; and a King's ship about eighteen guns or so, two miles upon our lee-boom, has shortened sail, apparently to take us under her wing, which may not be altogether unnecessary in the latitude of Cape Wrath, where several vessels have been taken

Digitized by Google

by Yankee-Doodle. The sloop-of-war looks as if she could bite hard, and is supposed by our folks to be the Malay. If we can speak the captain, we will invite him to some grouse, or send him some, as he likes best, for Marchie's campaign was very successful.

"18th *August* 1814.—Bessy Millie's charm has failed us. After a rainy night, the wind has come round to the north-west, and is getting almost contrary. We have weathered Whitten-head, however, and Cape Wrath, the north-western extremity of Britain, is now in sight. The weather gets rainy and squally. Hamilton and Erskine keep their berths. Duff and I sit upon deck, like two great bears, wrapt in watch-cloaks, the sea flying over us every now and then. At length, after a sound buffeting with the rain, the doubling Cape Wrath with this wind is renounced as impracticable, and we stand away for Loch Eribol, a lake running into the extensive country of Lord Reay. No sickness; we begin to get hardy sailors in that particular. The ground rises upon us very bold and mountainous, especially a very high steep mountain, called Ben-y-Hope, at the head of a lake called Loch Hope. The weather begins to mitigate as we get under the lee of the land. Loch Eribol opens, running up into a wild and barren scene of crags and hills. The proper anchorage is said to be at the head of the lake, but

Digitized by Google

to go eight miles up so narrow an inlet would expose us to be wind-bound. A pilot boat comes off from Mr Anderson's house, a principal tacksman of Lord Reay's. After some discussion we anchor within a reef of sunken rocks, nearly opposite to Mr Anderson's house of Rispan; the situation is not, we are given to understand, altogether without danger if the wind should blow hard, but it is now calm. In front of our anchorage a few shapeless patches of land, not exceeding a few yards in diameter, have been prepared for corn by the spade, and bear wretched crops. All the rest of the view is utter barrenness; the distant hills, we are told, contain plenty of deer, being part of a forest belonging to Lord Reay, who is proprietor of all the extensive range of desolation now under our eye. The water has been kinder than the land, for we hear of plenty of salmon, and haddocks, and lobsters, and send our faithful minister of the interior, John Peters, the steward, to procure some of those good things of this very indifferent land, and to invite Mr Anderson to dine with us. Four o'clock, — John has just returned, successful in both commissions, and the evening concludes pleasantly.

"19*th August* 1814, *Loch Eribol, near Cape Wrath.*— Went off before eight A.M. to breakfast with our friend Mr Anderson. His house, invisible from the vessel at her moorings, and, indeed, from

Digitized by Google

any part of the entrance into Loch Eribol, is a very comfortable one, lying obscured behind a craggy eminence. A little creek, winding up behind the crag, and in front of the house, forms a small harbour, and gives a romantic air of concealment and snugness. There we found a ship upon the stocks, built from the keel by a Highland carpenter, who had magnanimously declined receiving assistance from any of the ship-carpenters who happened to be here occasionally, lest it should be said he could not have finished his task without their aid. An ample Highland breakfast of excellent new-taken herring, equal to those of Lochfine, fresh haddocks, fresh eggs, and fresh butter, not forgetting the bottle of whisky, and bannocks of barley, and oat-cakes, with the Lowland luxuries of tea and coffee. After breakfast, took the long-boat, and under Mr Anderson's pilotage, row to see a remarkable natural curiosity, called Uamh Smowe, or the Largest Cave. Stevenson, Marchie, and Duff, go by land. Take the fowling-piece, and shoot some sea-fowl and a large hawk of an uncommon appearance. Fire four shots, and kill three times. After rowing about three miles to the westward of the entrance from the sea to Loch Eribol, we enter a creek, between two ledges of very high rocks, and landing, find ourselves in front of the wonder we came to see. The exterior apartment of the cavern opens under

Digitized by Google

a tremendous rock, facing the creek, and occupies the full space of the ravine where we landed. From the top of the rock to the base of the cavern, as we afterwards discovered by plumb, is eighty feet, of which the height of the arch is fifty-three feet; the rest, being twenty-seven feet, is occupied by the precipitous rock under which it opens; the width is fully in proportion to this great height, being 110 feet. The depth of this exterior cavern is 200 feet, and it is apparently supported by an intermediate column of natural rock. Being open to daylight and the sea air, the cavern is perfectly clean and dry, and the sides are incrusted with stalactites. This immense cavern is so well proportioned, that I was not aware of its extraordinary height and extent, till I saw our two friends, who had somewhat preceded us, having made the journey by land, appearing like pigmies among its recesses. Afterwards, on entering the cave, I climbed up a sloping rock at its extremity, and was much struck with the prospect, looking outward from this magnificent arched cavern upon our boat and its crew, the view being otherwise bounded by the ledge of rocks which formed each side of the creek. We now propose to investigate the farther wonders of the cave of Smowe. In the right or west side of the cave opens an interior cavern of a different aspect. The height of this second passage may be about twelve

Digitized by Google

or fourteen feet, and its breadth about six or eight, neatly formed into a Gothic portal by the hand of nature. The lower part of this porch is closed by a ledge of rock, rising to the height of between five and six feet, and which I can compare to nothing but the hatch-door of a shop. Beneath this hatch a brook finds its way out, forms a black deep pool before the Gothic archway, and then escapes to the sea, and forms the creek in which we landed. It is somewhat difficult to approach this strange pass, so as to gain a view into the interior of the cavern. By clambering along a broken and dangerous cliff, you can, however, look into it; but only so far as to see a twilight space filled with dark-coloured water in great agitation, and representing a subterranean lake, moved by some fearful convulsion of nature. How this pond is supplied with water you cannot see from even this point of vantage, but you are made partly sensible of the truth by a sound like the dashing of a sullen cataract within the bowels of the earth. Here the adventure has usually been abandoned, and Mr Anderson only mentioned two travellers whose curiosity had led them farther. We were resolved, however, to see the adventures of this new cave of Montesinos to an end. Duff had already secured the use of a fisher's boat and its hands, our own long-boat being too heavy and far too valuable to be ventured upon this

Digitized by Google

Cocytus. Accordingly the skiff was dragged up the brook to the rocky ledge or hatch which barred up the interior cavern, and there, by force of hands, our boat's crew and two or three fishers first raised the boat's bow upon the ledge of rock, then brought her to a level, being poised upon that narrow hatch, and lastly launched her down into the dark and deep subterranean lake within. The entrance was so narrow, and the boat so clumsy, that we, who were all this while clinging to the rock like sea-fowl, and with scarce more secure footing, were greatly alarmed for the safety of our trusty sailors. At the instant when the boat sloped inward to the cave, a Highlander threw himself into it with great boldness and dexterity, and, at the expense of some bruises, shared its precipitate fall into the waters under the earth. This dangerous exploit was to prevent the boat drifting away from us, but a cord at its stern would have been a safer and surer expedient.

"When our *enfant perdu* had recovered breath and legs, he brought the boat back to the entrance, and took us in. We now found ourselves embarked on a deep black pond of an irregular form, the rocks rising like a dome all around us, and high over our heads. The light, a sort of dubious twilight, was derived from two chasms in the roof of the vault, for that offered by the entrance was but trifling. Down one of those rents there poured from the height of

Digitized by Google

eighty feet, in a sheet of foam, the brook, which, after supplying the subterranean pond with water, finds its way out beneath the ledge of rock that blocks its entrance. The other skylight, if I may so term it, looks out at the clear blue sky. It is impossible for description to explain the impression made by so strange a place, to which we had been conveyed with so much difficulty. The cave itself, the pool, the cataract, would have been each separate objects of wonder, but all united together, and affecting at once the ear, the eye, and the imagination, their effect is indescribable. The length of this pond, or loch as the people here call it, is seventy feet over, the breadth about thirty at the narrowest point, and it is of great depth.

"As we resolved to proceed, we directed the boat to a natural arch on the right hand, or west side of the cataract. This archway was double, a high arch being placed above a very low one, as in a Roman aqueduct. The ledge of rock which forms this lower arch is not above two feet and a half high above the water, and under this we were to pass in the boat; so that we were fain to pile ourselves flat upon each other like a layer of herrings. By this judicious disposition we were pushed in safety beneath this low-browed rock into a region of utter darkness. For this, however, we were provided, for we had a tinder-box and lights. The view back upon the twilight

Digitized by Google

lake we had crossed, its sullen eddies wheeling round and round, and its echoes resounding to the ceaseless thunder of the waterfall, seemed dismal enough, and was aggravated by temporary darkness, and in some degree by a sense of danger. The lights, however, dispelled the latter sensation, if it prevailed to any extent, and we now found ourselves in a narrow cavern, sloping somewhat upward from the water. We got out of the boat, proceeded along some slippery places upon shelves of the rock, and gained the dry land. I cannot say *dry*, excepting comparatively. We were then in an arched cave, twelve feet high in the roof, and about eight feet in breadth, which went winding into the bowels of the earth for about an hundred feet. The sides, being (like those of the whole cavern) of limestone rock, were covered with stalactites, and with small drops of water like dew, glancing like ten thousand thousand sets of birthday diamonds under the glare of our lights. In some places these stalactites branch out into broad and curious ramifications, resembling coral and the foliage of submarine plants.

"When we reached the extremity of this passage, we found it declined suddenly to a horrible ugly gulf, or well, filled with dark water, and of great depth, over which the rock closed. We threw in stones, which indicated great profundity by their sound; and growing more familiar with the horrors of this den,

Digitized by Google

we sounded with an oar, and found about ten feet depth at the entrance, but discovered in the same manner, that the gulf extended under the rock, deepening as it went, God knows how far. Imagination can figure few deaths more horrible than to be sucked under these rocks into some unfathomable abyss, where your corpse could never be found to give intimation of your fate. A water kelpy, or an evil spirit of any aquatic propensities, could not choose a fitter abode; and, to say the truth, I believe at our first entrance, and when all our feelings were afloat at the novelty of the scene, the unexpected plashing of a seal would have routed the whole dozen of us The mouth of this ugly gulf was all covered with slimy alluvious substances, which led Mr Stevenson to observe, that it could have no separate source, but must be fed from the waters of the outer lake and brook, as it lay upon the same level, and seemed to rise and fall with them, without having anything to indicate a separate current of its own. Rounding this perilous hole, or gulf, upon the aforesaid alluvious substances, which formed its shores, we reached the extremity of the cavern, which there ascends like a vent, or funnel, directly up a sloping precipice, but hideously black and slippery from wet and sea-weeds. One of our sailors, a Zetlander, climbed up a good way, and by holding up a light, we could plainly perceive that this vent closed after ascending to a

Digitized by Google

considerable height; and here, therefore, closed the adventure of the cave of Smowe, for it appeared utterly impossible to proceed further in any direction whatever. There is a tradition, that the first Lord Reay went through various subterranean abysses, and at length returned, after ineffectually endeavouring to penetrate to the extremity of the Smowe cave; but this must be either fabulous, or an exaggerated account of such a journey as we performed. And under the latter supposition, it is a curious instance how little the people in the neighbourhood of this curiosity have cared to examine it.

"In returning, we endeavoured to familiarize ourselves with the objects in detail, which, viewed together, had struck us with so much wonder. The stalactites, or limy incrustations, upon the walls of the cavern, are chiefly of a dark-brown colour, and in this respect, Smowe is inferior, according to Mr Stevenson, to the celebrated cave of Macallister in the Isle of Skye. In returning, the men with the lights, and the various groups and attitudes of the party, gave a good deal of amusement. We now ventured to clamber along the side of the rock above the subterranean water, and thus gained the upper arch, and had the satisfaction to see our admirable and good-humoured commodore, Hamilton, floated beneath the lower arch into the second cavern. His goodly countenance being illumined by a single

Digitized by Google

candle, his recumbent posture, and the appearance of a hard-favoured fellow guiding the boat, made him the very picture of Bibo, in the catch, when he wakes in Charon's boat:

> 'When Bibo thought fit from this world to retreat,
> As full of Champagne as an egg's full of meat,
> He waked in the boat, and to Charon he said,
> That he would be row'd back, for he was not yet dead.'

"Descending from our superior station on the upper arch, we now again embarked, and spent some time in rowing about and examining this second cave. We could see our dusky entrance, into which daylight streamed faint, and at a considerable distance; and under the arch of the outer cavern stood a sailor, with an oar in his hand, looking, in the perspective, like a fairy with his wand. We at length emerged unwillingly from this extraordinary basin, and again enjoyed ourselves in the large exterior cave. Our boat was hoisted with some difficulty over the ledge, which appears the natural barrier of the interior apartments, and restored in safety to the fishers, who were properly gratified for the hazard which their skiff, as well as one of themselves, had endured. After this we resolved to ascend the rocks, and discover the opening by which the cascade was discharged from above into the second cave. Erskine and I, by some chance, took the wrong side of the

Digitized by Google

rocks, and, after some scrambling, got into the face of a dangerous precipice, where Erskine, to my great alarm, turned giddy, and declared he could not go farther. I clambered up without much difficulty, and shouting to the people below, got two of them to assist the Counsellor, who was brought into, by the means which have sent many a good fellow out of, the world — I mean a rope. We easily found the brook, and traced its descent till it precipitates itself down a chasm of the rock into the subterranean apartment, where we first made its acquaintance. Divided by a natural arch of stone from the chasm down which the cascade falls, there is another rent, which serves as a skylight to the cavern, as I already noticed. Standing on a natural foot-bridge, formed by the arch which divides these two gulfs, you have a grand prospect into both. The one is deep, black, and silent, only affording at the bottom a glimpse of the dark and sullen pool which occupies the interior of the cavern. The right-hand rent, down which the stream discharges itself, seems to ring and reel with the unceasing roar of the cataract which envelopes its side in mist and foam. This part of the scene alone is worth a day's journey. After heavy rains, the torrent is discharged into this cavern with astonishing violence; and the size of the chasm being inadequate to the reception of such a volume of water, it is thrown up in spouts like the blowing of a whale.

Digitized by Google

But at such times the entrance of the cavern is inaccessible.

"Taking leave of this scene with regret, we rowed back to Loch Eribol. Having yet an hour to spare before dinner, we rowed across the mouth of the lake to its shore on the east side. This rises into a steep and shattered stack of mouldering calcareous rock and stone, called Whiten Head. It is pierced with several caverns, the abode of seals and cormorants. We entered one, where our guide promised to us a grand sight, and so it certainly would have been to any who had not just come from Smowe. In this last cave the sea enters through a lofty arch, and penetrates to a great depth; but the weight of the tide made it dangerous to venture very far, so we did not see the extremity of Friskin's Cavern, as it is called. We shot several cormorants in the cave, the echoes roaring like thunder at every discharge. We received, however, a proper rebuke from Hamilton, our commodore, for killing anything which was not fit for *eating*. It was in vain I assured him that the Zetlanders made excellent hare-soup out of these sea-fowl. He will listen to no subordinate authority, and rules us by the Almanach des Gourmands. Mr Anderson showed me the spot where the Norwegian monarch, Haco, moored his fleet, after the discomfiture he received at Largs. He caused all the cattle to be driven

Digitized by Google

from the hills, and houghed and slain upon a broad flat rock, for the refreshment of his dispirited army. Mr Anderson dines with us, and very handsomely presents us with a stock of salmon, haddocks, and so forth, which we requite by a small present of wine from our sea stores. This has been a fine day; the first fair day here for these eight weeks.

"*20th August* 1814.—Sail by four in the morning, and by half-past six are off Cape Wrath. All hands ashore by seven, and no time allowed to breakfast, except on beef and biscuit. On this dread Cape, so fatal to mariners, it is proposed to build a lighthouse, and Mr Stevenson has fixed on an advantageous situation. It is a high promontory, with steep sides that go sheer down to the breakers, which lash its feet. There is no landing, except in a small creek about a mile and a half to the eastward. There the foam of the sea plays at long bowls with a huge collection of large stones, some of them a ton in weight, but which these fearful billows chuck up and down as a child tosses a ball. The walk from thence to the Cape was over rough boggy ground, but good sheep pasture. Mr —— Dunlop, brother to the laird of Dunlop, took from Lord Reay, some years since, a large track of sheep-land, including the territories of Cape Wrath, for about £300 a-year, for the period of two-nineteen years and a liferent. It is needless to say, that the tenant has an immense

Digitized by Google

profit, for the value of pasture is now understood here. Lord Reay's estate, containing 150,000 square acres, and measuring eighty miles by sixty, was, before commencement of the last leases, rented at £1200 a-year. It is now worth £5000, and Mr Anderson says he may let it this ensuing year (when the leases expire) for about £15,000. But then he must resolve to part with his people, for these rents can only be given upon the supposition that sheep are generally to be introduced on the property. In an economical, and perhaps in a political point of view, it might be best that every part of a country were dedicated to that sort of occupation for which nature has best fitted it. But to effect this reform in the present instance, Lord Reay must turn out several hundred families who have lived under him and his fathers for many generations, and the swords of whose fathers probably won the lands from which he is now expelling them. He is a good-natured man, I suppose, for Mr A. says he is hesitating whether he shall not take a more moderate rise (£7000 or £8000), and keep his Highland tenantry. This last war (before the short peace), he levied a fine fencible corps (the Reay fencibles), and might have doubled their number. *Wealth* is no doubt *strength* in a country, while all is quiet and governed by law, but on any altercation or internal commotion, it ceases to be strength, and is only the means of

Digitized by Google

tempting the strong to plunder the possessors. Much may be said on both sides.*

" Cape Wrath is a striking point, both from the dignity of its own appearance, and from the mental association of its being the extreme cape of Scotland, with reference to the north-west. There is no land in the direct line between this point and America. I saw a pair of large eagles, and if I had had the rifle-gun might have had a shot, for the birds, when I first saw them, were perched on a rock within about sixty or seventy yards. They are, I suppose, little disturbed here, for they showed no great alarm. After the Commissioners and Mr Stevenson had examined the headland, with reference to the site of a lighthouse, we strolled to our boat, and came on board between ten and eleven. Get the boat up upon deck, and set sail for the Lewis with light winds and a great swell of tide. Pass a rocky islet called Gousla. Here a fine vessel was lately wrecked; all her crew perished but one, who got upon the rocks from the boltsprit, and was afterwards brought off. In front of Cape Wrath are some angry breakers, called the *Staggs;* the rocks which occasion them are visible at low water. The country behind Cape

* The whole of the immense district called *Lord Reay's country* — the habitation, as far back as history reaches, of the clan Mackay — has passed, since Sir W. Scott's journal was written, into the hands of the noble family of Sutherland.

Digitized by Google

Wrath swells in high sweeping elevations, but without any picturesque or dignified mountainous scenery. But on sailing westward a few miles, particularly after doubling a headland called the Stour of Assint, the coast assumes the true Highland character, being skirted with a succession of picturesque mountains of every variety of height and outline. These are the hills of Ross-shire—a waste and thinly-peopled district at this extremity of the island. We would willingly have learned the names of the most remarkable, but they are only laid down in the charts by the cant names given them by mariners, from their appearance, as the Sugar-loaf, and so forth. Our breeze now increases, and seems steadily favourable, carrying us on with exhilarating rapidity, at the rate of eight knots an hour, with the romantic outline of the mainland under our lee-beam, and the dusky shores of the Long Island beginning to appear ahead. We remain on deck long after it is dark, watching the phosphoric effects occasioned, or made visible, by the rapid motion of the vessel, and enlightening her course with a continued succession of sparks and even flashes of broad light, mingled with the foam which she flings from her bows and head. A rizard haddock and to bed. Charming weather all day.

"21*st August* 1814.—Last night went out like a lamb, but this morning came in like a lion, all roar and tumult. The wind shifted and became squally;

Digitized by Google

the mingled and confused tides that run among the Hebrides got us among their eddies, and gave the cutter such concussions, that, besides reeling at every wave, she trembled from head to stern, with a sort of very uncomfortable and ominous vibration. Turned out about three, and went on deck; the prospect dreary enough, as we are beating up a narrow channel between two dark and disconsolate-looking islands, in a gale of wind and rain, guided only by the twinkling glimmer of the light on an island called Ellan Glas. — Go to bed and sleep soundly, notwithstanding the rough rocking. Great bustle about four; the light-keeper having seen our flag, comes off to be our pilot, as in duty bound. Asleep again till eight. When I went on deck, I found we had anchored in the little harbour of Scalpa, upon the coast of Harris, a place dignified by the residence of Charles Edward in his hazardous attempt to escape in 1746. An old man, lately alive here, called Donald Macleod, was his host and temporary protector, and could not, until his dying hour, mention the distresses of the adventurer without tears. From this place, Charles attempted to go to Stornoway; but the people of the Lewis had taken arms to secure him, under an idea that he was coming to plunder the country. And although his faithful attendant, Donald Macleod, induced them by fair words, to lay aside their purpose, yet they insisted

Digitized by Google

upon his leaving the island. So the unfortunate Prince was obliged to return back to Scalpa. He afterwards escaped to South Uist, but was chased in the passage by Captain Fergusson's sloop of war. The harbour seems a little neat secure place of anchorage. Within a small island, there seems more shelter than where we are lying; but it is crowded with vessels, part of those whom we saw in the Long-Hope — so Mr Wilson chose to remain outside. The ground looks hilly and barren in the extreme; but I can say little for it, as an incessant rain prevents my keeping the deck. Stevenson and Duff, accompanied by Marchie, go to examine the lighthouse on Ellan Glas. Hamilton and Erskine keep their beds, having scarce slept last night — and I bring up my journal. The day continues bad, with little intermission of rain. Our party return with little advantage from their expedition, excepting some fresh butter from the lighthouse. The harbour of Scalpa is composed of a great number of little uninhabited islets. The masts of the vessels at anchor behind them have a good effect. To bed early, to make amends for last night, with the purpose of sailing for Dunvegan in the Isle of Skye with daylight."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXI.

Diary continued — Isle of Harris — Monuments of the Chiefs of Macleod — Isle of Skye — Dunvegan Castle — Loch Corriskin — Macallister's Cave.

1814.

"22*d August* 1814. — Sailed early in the morning from Scalpa Harbour, in order to cross the Minch, or Channel, for Dunvegan; but the breeze being contrary, we can only creep along the Harris shore, until we shall gain the advantage of the tide. The east coast of Harris, as we now see it, is of a character which sets human industry at utter defiance, consisting of high sterile hills, covered entirely with stones, with a very slight sprinkling of stunted heather. Within, appear still higher peaks of mountains. I have never seen anything more unpropitious, excepting the southern side of Griban, on the shores of Loch-na-Gaoil, in the Isle of Mull. We

Digitized by Google

sail along this desolate coast (which exhibits no mark of human habitation) with the advantage of a pleasant day, and a brisk, though not a favourable gale. *Two o'clock* — Row ashore to see the little harbour and village of Rowdill, on the coast of Harris. There is a decent three-storied house, belonging to the laird, Mr Macleod of the Harris,* where we were told two of his female relations lived. A large vessel had been stranded last year, and two or three carpenters were about repairing her, but in such a style of Highland laziness that I suppose she may float next century. The harbour is neat enough, but wants a little more cover to the eastward. The ground, on landing, does not seem altogether so desolate as from the sea. In the former point of view, we overlook all the retired glens and crevices, which, by infinite address and labour, are rendered capable of a little cultivation. But few and evil are the patches so cultivated in Harris, as far as we have seen. Above the house is situated the ancient church of Rowdill. This pile was unfortunately burned down by accident some years since, by fire taking to a quantity of wood laid in for fitting it up. It is a building in the form of a cross, with a rude tower at the eastern end, like some old English churches. Upon this tower are certain pieces of sculpture, of a

* The Harris has recently passed into the possession of the Earl of Dunmore. — [1839.]

Digitized by Google

kind the last which one would have expected on a building dedicated to religious purposes. Some have lately fallen in a storm, but enough remains to astonish us at the grossness of the architect and the age.

"Within the church are two ancient monuments. The first, on the right hand of the pulpit, presents the effigy of a warrior completely armed in plate armour, with his hand on his two-handed broadsword. His helmet is peaked, with a gorget or upper corslet which seems to be made of mail. His figure lies flat on the monument, and is in bas relief, of the natural size. The arch which surmounts this monument is curiously carved with the figures of the apostles. In the flat space of the wall beneath the arch, and above the tombstone, are a variety of compartments, exhibiting the arms of the Macleods, being a galley with the sails spread, a rude view of Dunvegan Castle, some saints and religious emblems, and a Latin inscription, of which our time (or skill) was inadequate to decipher the first line; but the others announced the tenant of the monument to be *Alexander, filius Willielmi MacLeod, de Dunvegan, Anno Dni* M.CCCC.XXVIII. A much older monument (said also to represent a Laird of Macleod) lies in the transept, but without any arch over it. It represents the grim figure of a Highland chief, not in feudal armour like the former, but dressed in a plaid—(or perhaps a shirt of mail)—reaching down below the knees, with

Digitized by Google

a broad sort of hem upon its lower extremity. The figure wears a high-peaked open helmet, or scull-cap, with a sort of tippet of mail attached to it, which falls over the breast of the warrior, pretty much as women wear a handkerchief or short shawl. This remarkable figure is bearded most tyrannically, and has one hand on his long two-handed sword, the other on his dirk, both of which hang at a broad belt. Another weapon, probably his knife, seems to have been also attached to the baldric. His feet rest on his two dogs entwined together, and a similar emblem is said to have supported his head, but is now defaced, as indeed the whole monument bears marks of the unfortunate fire. A lion is placed at each end of the stone. Who the hero was, whom this martial monument commemorated, we could not learn. Indeed, our Cicerone was but imperfect. He chanced to be a poor devil of an excise-officer who had lately made a seizure of a still upon a neighbouring island, after a desperate resistance. Upon seeing our cutter, he mistook it, as has often happened to us, for an armed vessel belonging to the revenue, which the appearance and equipment of the yacht, and the number of men, make her resemble considerably. He was much disappointed when he found we had nothing to do with the tribute to Cæsar, and begged us not to undeceive the natives, who were so much irritated against him that he found

Digitized by Google

it necessary to wear a loaded pair of pistols in each pocket, which he showed to our Master, Wilson, to convince him of the perilous state in which he found himself while exercising so obnoxious a duty in the midst of a fierce-tempered people, and at many miles distance from any possible countenance or assistance. The village of Rowdill consists of Highland huts of the common construction, *i. e.* a low circular wall of large stones, without mortar, deeply sunk in the ground, surmounted by a thatched roof secured by ropes, without any chimney but a hole in the roof. There may be forty such houses in the village. We heard that the laird was procuring a schoolmaster—he of the parish being ten miles distant—and there was a neatness about the large house which seems to indicate that things are going on well. Adjacent to the churchyard were two eminences, apparently artificial. Upon one was fixed a stone, seemingly the staff of a cross; upon another the head of a cross, with a sculpture of the crucifixion. These monuments (which refer themselves to Catholic times of course) are popularly called, *The Croshlets*—crosslets, or little crosses.

"Get on board at five, and stand across the Sound for Skye with the ebb-tide in our favour. The sunset being delightful, we enjoy it upon deck, admiring the Sound on each side bounded by islands. That of Skye lies in the east, with some very high moun-

Digitized by Google

tains in the centre, and a bold rocky coast in front, opening up into several lochs, or arms of the sea;—that of Loch Folliart, near the upper end of which Dunvegan is situated, is opposite to us, but our breeze has failed us, and the flood-tide will soon set in, which is likely to carry us to the northward of this object of our curiosity until next morning. To the west of us lies Harris, with its variegated ridges of mountains, now clear, distinct, and free from clouds. The sun is just setting behind the Island of Bernera, of which we see one conical hill. North Uist and Benbecula continue from Harris to the southerly line of what is called the Long Island. They are as bold and mountainous, and probably as barren as Harris—worse they cannot be. Unnumbered islets and holms, each of which has its name and its history, skirt these larger isles, and are visible in this clear evening as distinct and separate objects, lying lone and quiet upon the face of the undisturbed and scarce-rippling sea. To our berths at ten, after admiring the scenery for some time.

"23*d August* 1814.—Wake under the Castle of Dunvegan, in the Loch of Folliart. I had sent a card to the Laird of Macleod in the morning, who came off before we were dressed, and carried us to his castle to breakfast. A part of Dunvegan is very old; 'its birth tradition notes not.' Another large tower was built by the same Alaster Macleod whose

Digitized by Google

burial-place and monument we saw yesterday at Rowdill. He had a Gaelic surname, signifying the Hump-backed. Roderick More (knighted by James VI.) erected a long edifice combining these two ancient towers: and other pieces of building, forming a square, were accomplished at different times. The whole castle occupies a precipitous mass of rock overhanging the lake, divided by two or three islands in that place, which form a snug little harbour under the walls. There is a court-yard looking out upon the sea, protected by a battery, at least a succession of embrasures, for only two guns are pointed, and these unfit for service. The ancient entrance rose up a flight of steps cut in the rock, and passed into this court-yard through a portal, but this is now demolished. You land under the castle, and walking round, find yourself in front of it. This was originally inaccessible, for a brook coming down on the one side, a chasm of the rocks on the other, and a ditch in front, made it impervious. But the late Macleod built a bridge over the stream, and the present laird is executing an entrance suitable to the character of this remarkable fortalice, by making a portal between two advanced towers and an outer court, from which he proposes to throw a drawbridge over to the high rock in front of the castle. This, if well executed, cannot fail to have a good and characteristic effect. We were most kindly and

Digitized by Google

hospitably received by the chieftain, his lady, and his sister;* the two last are pretty and accomplished young women, a sort of persons whom we have not seen for some time; and I was quite as much pleased with renewing my acquaintance with them as with the sight of a good field of barley just cut (the first harvest we have seen), not to mention an extensive young plantation and some middle-aged trees, though all had been strangers to mine eyes since I left Leith. In the garden—or rather the orchard which was formerly the garden—is a pretty cascade, divided into two branches, and called Rorie More's Nurse, because he loved to be lulled to sleep by the sound of it. The day was rainy, or at least inconstant, so we could not walk far from the castle. Besides the assistance of the laird himself, who was most politely and easily attentive, we had that of an intelligent gentlemanlike clergyman, Mr Suter, minister of Kilmore, to explain the *carte-de-pays*. Within the castle we saw a remarkable drinking-cup, with an inscription dated A.D. 993, which I have described particularly elsewhere.† I saw also a fairy flag, a pennon of silk, with something like round red rowan-berries wrought upon it. We also saw the drinking-horn of Rorie More, holding about three

* Miss Macleod, now Mrs Spencer Perceval.

† See Note, Lord of the Isles, Scott's Poetical Works, vol. x. p. 294.

Digitized by Google

pints English measure — an ox's horn tipped with silver, not nearly so large as Watt of Harden's bugle. The rest of the curiosities in the castle are chiefly Indian, excepting an old dirk and the fragment of a two-handed sword. We learn that most of the Highland superstitions, even that of the second-sight, are still in force. Gruagach, a sort of tutelary divinity, often mentioned by Martin in his history of the Western Islands, has still his place and credit, but is modernized into a tall man, always a Lowlander, with a long coat and white waistcoat. Passed a very pleasant day. I should have said the fairy-flag had three properties. Produced in battle, it multiplied the numbers of the Macleods — spread on the nuptial bed, it ensured fertility — and lastly, it brought herring into the loch.*

* The following passage, from the last of Scott's Letters on Demonology (written in 1830), refers to the night of this 23d of August 1814. He mentions that twice in his life he had experienced the sensation which the Scotch call *eerie;* gives a night-piece of his early youth in the castle of Glammis, which has already been quoted (*ante*, vol. i. p. 295), and proceeds thus: — "Amid such tales of ancient tradition, I had from Macleod and his lady the courteous offer of the haunted apartment of the castle, about which, as a stranger, I might be supposed interested. Accordingly I took possession of it about the witching hour. Except, perhaps, some tapestry hangings, and the extreme thickness of the walls, which argued great antiquity, nothing could have been more comfortable than the interior of the apartment; but if you looked from the windows, the view was such as to

Digitized by Google

"*24th August* 1814.—This morning resist with difficulty Macleod's kind and pressing entreaty to send round the ship, and go to the cave at Airds by land; but our party is too large to be accom-

---

correspond with the highest tone of superstition. An autumnal blast, sometimes clear, sometimes driving mist before it, swept along the troubled billows of the lake, which it occasionally concealed, and by fits disclosed. The waves rushed in wild disorder on the shore, and covered with foam the steep pile of rocks, which, rising from the sea in forms something resembling the human figure, have obtained the name of Macleod's Maidens, and, in such a night, seemed no bad representative of the Norwegian goddesses, called Choosers of the Slain, or Riders of the Storm. There was something of the dignity of danger in the scene; for, on a platform beneath the windows, lay an ancient battery of cannon, which had sometimes been used against privateers even of late years. The distant scene was a view of that part of the Quillen mountains which are called, from their form, Macleod's Dining-Tables. The voice of an angry cascade, termed the Nurse of Rorie Mhor, because that chief slept best in its vicinity, was heard from time to time mingling its notes with those of wind and wave. Such was the haunted room at Dunvegan; and, as such, it well deserved a less sleepy inhabitant. In the language of Dr Johnson, who has stamped his memory on this remote place,—'I looked around me, and wondered that I was not more affected; but the mind is not at all times equally ready to be moved.' In a word, it is necessary to confess that, of all I heard or saw, the most engaging spectacle was the comfortable bed in which I hoped to make amends for some rough nights on shipboard, and where I slept accordingly without thinking of ghost or goblin, till I was called by my servant in the morning."

Digitized by Google

modated without inconvenience, and divisions are always awkward. Walk and see Macleod's farm. The plantations seem to thrive admirably, although I think he hazards planting his trees greatly too tall. Macleod is a spirited and judicious improver, and if he does not hurry too fast, cannot fail to be of service to his people. He seems to think and act much like a chief, without the fanfaronade of the character. See a female school patronised by Mrs M. There are about twenty girls, who learn reading, writing, and spinning; and being compelled to observe habits of cleanliness and neatness when at school, will probably be the means of introducing them by degrees at home. The roads around the castle are, generally speaking, very good; some are old, some made under the operation of the late act. Macleod says almost all the contractors for these last roads have failed, being tightly looked after by Government, which I confess I think very right. If Government is to give relief where a disadvantageous contract has been engaged in, it is plain it cannot be refused in similar instances, so that all calculations of expenses in such operations are at an end. The day being delightfully fair and warm, we walk up to the Church of Kilmore. In a cottage, at no great distance, we heard the women singing as they *waulked* the cloth, by rubbing it with their hands and feet, and screaming all the while in a sort

Digitized by Google

of chorus. At a distance, the sound was wild and sweet enough, but rather discordant when you approached too near the performers. In the churchyard (otherwise not remarkable) was a pyramidical monument erected to the father of the celebrated Simon, Lord Lovat, who was fostered at Dunvegan. It is now nearly ruinous, and the inscription has fallen down. Return to the castle, take our luncheon, and go aboard at three—Macleod accompanying us in proper style with his piper. We take leave of the castle, where we have been so kindly entertained, with a salute of seven guns. The chief returns ashore, with his piper playing 'the Macleod's gathering,' heard to advantage along the calm and placid loch, and dying as it retreated from us.

"The towers of Dunvegan, with the banner which floated over them in honour of their guests, now showed to great advantage. On the right were a succession of three remarkable hills, with round flat tops, popularly called Macleod's Dining-Tables. Far behind these, in the interior of the island, arise the much higher and more romantic mountains, called Quillen, or Cuillin, a name which they have been said to owe to no less a person than Cuthullin, or Cuchullin, celebrated by Ossian. I ought, I believe, to notice, that Macleod and Mr Suter have both heard a tacksman of Macleod's, called Grant, recite the celebrated Address to the Sun; and an-

Digitized by Google

other person, whom they named, repeat the description of Cuchullin's car. But all agree as to the gross infidelity of Macpherson as a translator and editor. It ends in the explanation of the Adventures in the cave of Montesinos, afforded to the Knight of La Mancha, by the ape of Gines de Passamonte — some are true and some are false. There is little poetical tradition in this country, yet there should be a great deal, considering how lately the bards and genealogists existed as a distinct order. Macleod's *hereditary* piper is called MacCrimmon, but the present holder of the office has risen above his profession. He is an old man, a lieutenant in the army, and a most capital piper, possessing about 200 tunes and pibrochs, most of which will probably die with him, as he declines to have any of his sons instructed in his art. He plays to Macleod and his lady, but only in the same room, and maintains his minstrel privilege by putting on his bonnet so soon as he begins to play. These MacCrimmons formerly kept a college in Skye for teaching the pipe-music. Macleod's present piper is of the name, but scarcely as yet a deacon of his craft. He played every day at dinner. — After losing sight of the Castle of Dunvegan, we open another branch of the loch on which it is situated, and see a small village upon its distant bank. The mountains of Quillen continue to form a background to the wild

Digitized by Google

landscape with their variegated and peaked outline. We approach Dunvegan-head, a bold bluff cape, where the loch joins the ocean. The weather, hitherto so beautiful that we had dined on deck *en seigneurs*, becomes overcast and hazy, with little or no wind. Laugh and lie down.

"*25th August* 1814.—Rise about eight o'clock, the yacht gliding delightfully along the coast of Skye with a fair wind and excellent day. On the opposite side lie the islands of Canna, Rum, and Muick, popularly Muck. On opening the sound between Rum and Canna, see a steep circular rock, forming one side of the harbour, on the point of which we can discern the remains of a tower of small dimensions, built, it is said, by a King of the Isles to secure a wife of whom he was jealous. But, as we kept the Skye side of the Sound, we saw little of these islands but what our spy-glasses could show us. The coast of Skye is highly romantic, and at the same time displayed a richness of vegetation on the lower grounds, to which we have hitherto been strangers. We passed three salt-water lochs, or deep embayments, called Loch Bracadale, Loch Eynort, and Loch Britta —and about eleven o'clock open Loch Scavig. We were now under the western termination of the high mountains of Quillen, whose weather-beaten and serrated peaks we had admired at a distance from Dungevan. They sunk here upon the sea, but with the

Digitized by Google

same bold and peremptory aspect which their distant appearance indicated. They seemed to consist of precipitous sheets of naked rock, down which the torrents were leaping in a hundred lines of foam. The tops, apparently inaccessible to human foot, were rent and split into the most tremendous pinnacles; towards the base of these bare and precipitous crags, the ground, enriched by the soil washed away from them, is verdant and productive. Having passed within the small isle of Soa, we enter Lock Scavig under the shoulder of one of these grisly mountains, and observe that the opposite side of the loch is of a milder character softened down into steep green declivities. From the depth of the bay advanced a headland of high rocks which divided the lake into two recesses, from each of which a brook seemed to issue. Here Macleod had intimated we should find a fine romantic loch, but we were uncertain up what inlet we should proceed in search of it. We chose, against our better judgment, the southerly inlet, where we saw a house which might afford us information. On manning our boat and rowing ashore, we observed a hurry among the inhabitants, owing to our being as usual suspected for *king's men*, although, Heaven knows, we have nothing to do with the revenue but to spend the part of it corresponding to our equipment. We find that there is a lake adjoining to each branch of the bay,

Digitized by Google

and foolishly walk a couple of miles to see that next the farm-house, merely because the honest man seemed jealous of the honour of his own loch, though we were speedily convinced it was not that which we had been recommended to examine. It had no peculiar merit excepting from its neighbourhood to a very high cliff or mountain of precipitous granite; otherwise, the sheet of water does not equal even Cauldshiels Loch. Returned and re-embarked in our boat, for our guide shook his head at our proposal to climb over the peninsula which divides the two bays and the two lakes. In rowing round the headland, surprised at the infinite number of sea-fowl, then busy apparently with a shoal of fish; at the depth of the bay, find that the discharge from this second lake forms a sort of waterfall or rather rapid; round this place were assembled hundreds of trouts and salmon struggling to get up into the fresh water; with a net we might have had twenty salmon at a haul, and a sailor, with no better hook than a crooked pin, caught a dish of trouts during our absence.

"Advancing up this huddling and riotous brook, we found ourselves in a most extraordinary scene: we were surrounded by hills of the boldest and most precipitous character, and on the margin of a lake which seemed to have sustained the constant ravages of torrents from these rude neighbours. The shores consisted of huge layers of naked granite, here and

Digitized by Google

there intermixed with bogs, and heaps of gravel and sand marking the course of torrents. Vegetation there was little or none, and the mountains rose so perpendicularly from the water's edge, that Borrowdale is a jest to them. We proceeded about one mile and a half up this deep, dark, and solitary lake, which is about two miles long, half a mile broad, and, as we learned, of extreme depth. The vapour which enveloped the mountain ridges obliged us by assuming a thousand shapes, varying its veils in all sorts of forms, but sometimes clearing off altogether. It is true it made us pay the penalty by some heavy and downright showers, from the frequency of which, a Highland boy, whom we brought from the farm, told us the lake was popularly called the Water Kettle. The proper name is Loch Corriskin, from the deep *corrie* or hollow in the mountains of Cuillin, which affords the basin for this wonderful sheet of water. It is as exquisite as a savage scene, as Loch Katrine is as a scene of stern beauty. After having penetrated so far as distinctly to observe the termination of the lake, under an immense mountain which rises abruptly from the head of the waters, we returned, and often stopped to admire the ravages which storms must have made in these recesses when all human witnesses were driven to places of more shelter and security. Stones, or rather large massive fragments of rock of a composite kind, perfectly

Digitized by Google

different from the granite barriers of the lake, lay upon the rocky beach in the strangest and most precarious situations, as if abandoned by the torrents which had borne them down from above; some lay loose and tottering upon the ledges of the natural rock, with so little security that the slightest push moved them, though their weight exceeded many tons. These detached rocks were chiefly what are called plum-pudding stones. Those which formed the shore were granite. The opposite side of the lake seemed quite pathless, as a huge mountain, one of the detached ridges of the Quillen, sinks in a profound and almost perpendicular precipice down to the water. On the left-hand side, which we traversed, rose a higher and equally inaccessible mountain, the top of which seemed to contain the crater of an exhausted volcano. I never saw a spot on which there was less appearance of vegetation of any kind; the eye rested on nothing but brown and naked crags,* and the rocks on which we walked by

* 'Rarely human eye has known
A scene so stern as that dread lake,
With its dark ledge of barren stone.
Seems that primeval earthquake's sway
Hath rent a strange and shatter'd way
Through the rude bosom of the hill;
And that each naked precipice,
Sable ravine and dark abyss,
Tells of the outrage still.

Digitized by Google

the side of the loch were as bare as the pavement of Cheapside. There are one or two spots of islets in the loch which seem to bear juniper, or some such low bushy shrub.

"Returned from our extraordinary walk and went on board. During dinner, our vessel quitted Loch Scavig, and having doubled its southern cape, opened the bay or salt-water Loch of Sleapin. There went again on shore to visit the late discovered and much celebrated cavern, called Macallister's Cave. It opens at the end of a deep ravine running upward from the sea, and the proprietor, Mr Macallister of Strath Aird, finding that visitors injured it, by breaking and

---

The wildest glen, but this, can show
Some touch of Nature's genial glow;
On high Benmore green mosses grow,
And heath-bells bud in deep Glencroe,
And copse on Cruchan-Ben;
But here—above, around, below,
On mountain or in glen,
Nor tree, nor shrub, nor plant, nor flower,
Nor aught of vegetative power,
The weary eye may ken;
For all is rocks at random thrown,
Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone,
As if were here denied
The summer's sun, the spring's sweet dew,
That clothe with many a varied hue
The bleakest mountain side.'

Lord of the Isles, III. 14.

Digitized by Google

carrying away the stalactites with which it abounds, has secured this cavern by an eight or nine feet wall, with a door. Upon enquiring for the key, we found it was three miles up the loch at the laird's house. It was now late, and to stay until a messenger had gone and returned three miles, was not to be thought of, any more than the alternative of going up the loch and lying there all night. We therefore, with regret, resolved to scale the wall, in which attempt, by the assistance of a rope and some ancient acquaintance with orchard breaking, we easily succeeded. The first entrance to this celebrated cave is rude and unpromising, but the light of the torches with which we were provided, is soon reflected from roof, floor, and walls, which seem as if they were sheeted with marble, partly smooth, partly rough with frost-work and rustic ornaments, and partly wrought into statuary. The floor forms a steep and difficult ascent, and might be fancifully compared to a sheet of water, which, while it rushed whitening and foaming down a declivity, had been suddenly arrested and consolidated by the spell of an enchanter. Upon attaining the summit of this ascent, the cave descends with equal rapidity to the brink of a pool of the most limpid water, about four or five yards broad. There opens beyond this pool a portal arch, with beautiful white chasing upon the sides, which promises a continuation of the cave. One of our sailors swam

Digitized by Google

across, for there was no other mode of passing, and informed us (as indeed we partly saw by the light he carried), that the enchantment of Macallister's cave terminated with this portal, beyond which there was only a rude ordinary cavern speedily choked with stones and earth. But the pool, on the brink of which we stood, surrounded by the most fanciful mouldings in a substance resembling white marble, and distinguished by the depth and purity of its waters, might be the bathing grotto of a Naiad. I think a statuary might catch beautiful hints from the fanciful and romantic disposition of the stalactites. There is scarce a form or group that an active fancy may not trace among the grotesque ornaments which have been gradually moulded in this cavern by the dropping of the calcareous water, and its hardening into petrifactions; many of these have been destroyed by the senseless rage of appropriation among recent tourists, and the grotto has lost (I am informed), through the smoke of torches, much of that vivid silver tint which was originally one of its chief distinctions. But enough of beauty remains to compensate for all that may be lost. As the easiest mode of return, I slid down the polished sheet of marble which forms the rising ascent, and thereby injured my pantaloons in a way which my jacket is ill calculated to conceal. Our wearables, after a month's hard service, begin to be frail, and there are

Digitized by Google

daily demands for repairs. Our eatables also begin to assume a real nautical appearance—no soft bread —milk a rare commodity—and those gentlemen most in favour with John Peters, the steward, who prefer salt beef to fresh. To make amends, we never hear of sea-sickness, and the good-humour and harmony of the party continue uninterrupted. When we left the cave we carried off two grandsons of Mr Macallister's, remarkably fine boys; and Erskine, who may be called *L'ami des Enfans*, treated them most kindly, and showed them all the curiosities in the vessel, causing even the guns to be fired for their amusement, besides filling their pockets with almonds and raisins. So that, with a handsome letter of apology, I hope we may erase any evil impression Mr Macallister may adopt from our storming the exterior defences of his cavern. After having sent them ashore in safety, stand out of the bay with little or no wind, for the opposite island of Egg."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXII.

Diary continued — Cave of Egg — Iona — Staffa — Dunstaffnage — Dunluce Castle — Giant's Causeway — Isle of Arran, &c. — Diary concluded.

AUGUST — SEPTEMBER, 1814

"26*th August* 1814.— At seven this morning were in the Sound which divides the Isle of Rum from that of Egg. Rum is rude, barren, and mountainous; Egg, although hilly and rocky, and traversed by one remarkable ridge called Scuir-Egg, has, in point of soil, a much more promising appearance. Southward of both lies Muick, or Muck, a low and fertile island, and though the least, yet probably the most valuable of the three. Caverns being still the order of the day, we man the boat and row along the shore of Egg, in quest of that which was the

Digitized by Google

memorable scene of a horrid feudal vengeance. We had rounded more than half the island, admiring the entrance of many a bold natural cave which its rocks exhibit, but without finding that which we sought, until we procured a guide. This noted cave has a very narrow entrance, through which one can hardly creep on knees and hands. It rises steep and lofty within, and runs into the bowels of the rock to the depth of 255 measured feet. The height at the entrance may be about three feet, but rises to eighteen or twenty, and the breadth may vary in the same proportion. The rude and stony bottom of this cave is strewed with the bones of men, women, and children, being the sad relics of the ancient inhabitants of the island, 200 in number, who were slain on the following occasion: — The Macdonalds of the Isle of Egg, a people dependent on Clanranald, had done some injury to the Laird of Macleod. The tradition of the isle says, that it was by a personal attack on the chieftain, in which his back was broken; but that of the other isles bears that the injury was offered to two or three of the Macleods, who, landing upon Egg and using some freedom with the young women, were seized by the islanders, bound hand and foot, and turned adrift in a boat, which the winds and waves safely conducted to Skye. To avenge the offence given, Macleod sailed with such a body of men as rendered resistance hopeless. The natives,

Digitized by Google

fearing his vengeance, concealed themselves in this cavern, and after strict search, the Macleods went on board their galleys, after doing what mischief they could, concluding the inhabitants had left the isle. But next morning they espied from their vessel a man upon the island, and, immediately landing again, they traced his retreat, by means of a light snow on the ground, to this cavern. Macleod then summoned the subterraneous garrison, and demanded that the individuals who had offended him, should be delivered up. This was peremptorily refused. The chieftain thereupon caused his people to divert the course of a rill of water, which, falling over the mouth of the cave, would have prevented his purposed vengeance. He then kindled at the entrance of the cavern a huge fire, and maintained it until all within were destroyed by suffocation. The date of this dreadful deed must have been recent, if one can judge from the fresh appearance of those relics. I brought off, in spite of the prejudices of our sailors, a skull, which seems that of a young woman.

"Before re-embarking, we visit another cave opening to the sea, but of a character widely different, being a large open vault as high as that of a cathedral, and running back a great way into the rock at the same height; the height and width of the opening give light to the whole. Here, after 1745, when the Catholic priests were scarcely tolerated, the

Digitized by Google

priest of Egg used to perform the Romish service. A huge ledge of rock, almost half-way up one side of the vault, served for altar and pulpit; and the appearance of a priest and Highland congregation in such an extraordinary place of worship, might have engaged the pencil of Salvator. Most of the inhabitants of Egg are still Catholics, and laugh at their neighbours of Rum, who, having been converted by the cane of their chieftain, are called *Protestants of the yellow stick.* The Presbyterian minister and Catholic priest live upon this little island on very good terms. The people here were much irritated against the men of a revenue vessel who had seized all the stills, &c., in the neighbouring Isle of Muck, with so much severity as to take even the people's bedding. We had been mistaken for some time for this obnoxious vessel. Got on board about two o'clock, and agreed to stand over for Coll, and to be ruled by the wind as to what was next to be done. Bring up my journal.

"27*th August* 1814.—The wind, to which we resigned ourselves, proves exceedingly tyrannical, and blows squally the whole night, which, with the swell of the Atlantic, now unbroken by any islands to windward, proves a means of great combustion in the cabin. The dishes and glasses in the steward's cupboards become locomotive — portmanteaus and writing-desks are more active than necessary — it is

Digitized by Google

scarce possible to keep one's self within bed, and impossible to stand upright if you rise. Having crept upon deck about four in the morning, I find we are beating to windward off the Isle of Tyree, with the determination on the part of Mr Stevenson, that his constituents should visit a reef of rocks called *Skerry Vhor*, where he thought it would be essential to have a lighthouse. Loud remonstrances on the part of the Commissioners, who one and all declare they will subscribe to his opinion, whatever it may be, rather than continue this infernal buffeting. Quiet perseverance on the part of Mr S., and great kicking, bouncing, and squabbling upon that of the Yacht, who seems to like the idea of Skerry Vhor as little as the Commissioners. At length, by dint of exertion, come in sight of this long ridge of rocks (chiefly under water), on which the tide breaks in a most tremendous style. There appear a few low broad rocks at one end of the reef, which is about a mile in length. These are never entirely under water, though the surf dashes over them. To go through all the forms, Hamilton, Duff, and I, resolve to land upon these bare rocks in company with Mr Stevenson. Pull through a very heavy swell with great difficulty, and approach a tremendous surf dashing over black pointed rocks. Our rowers, however, get the boat into a quiet creek between two rocks, where we contrive to land well wetted. I saw no-

Digitized by Google

thing remarkable in my way, excepting several seals, which we might have shot, but, in the doubtful circumstances of the landing, we did not care to bring guns. We took possession of the rock in name of the Commissioners, and generously bestowed our own great names on its crags and creeks. The rock was carefully measured by Mr S. It will be a most desolate position for a lighthouse—the Bell Rock and Eddystone a joke to it, for the nearest land is the wild island of Tyree, at fourteen miles' distance. So much for the Skerry Vhor.

"Came on board proud of our achievement; and, to the great delight of all parties, put the ship before the wind, and run swimmingly down for Iona. See a large square-rigged vessel, supposed an American. Reach Iona about five o'clock. The inhabitants of the isle of Columba, understanding their interest as well as if they had been Deal boatmen, charged two guineas for pilotage, which Captain W. abridged into fifteen shillings, too much for ten minutes' work. We soon got on shore, and landed in the bay of Martyrs, beautiful for its white sandy beach. Here all dead bodies are still landed, and laid for a time upon a small rocky eminence, called the Sweyne, before they are interred. Iona, the last time I saw it, seemed to me to contain the most wretched people I had any where seen. But either they have got better since I was here, or my eyes, familiarized with the wretched-

Digitized by Google

ness of Zetland and the Harris, are less shocked with that of Iona. Certainly their houses are better than either, and the appearance of the people not worse. This little fertile isle contains upwards of 400 inhabitants, all living upon small farms, which they divide and subdivide as their families increase, so that the country is greatly over-peopled, and in some danger of a famine in case of a year of scarcity. Visit the nunnery and Reilig Oran, or burial-place of St Oran, but the night coming on we return on board.

"28*th August* 1814.—Carry our breakfast ashore —take that repast in the house of Mr Maclean, the schoolmaster and cicerone of the island—and resume our investigation of the ruins of the cathedral and the cemetery. Of these monuments, more than of any other, it may be said with propriety,

> 'You never tread upon them but you set
> Your feet upon some ancient history.'

I do not mean to attempt a description of what is so well-known as the ruins of Iona. Yet I think it has been as yet inadequately performed, for the vast number of carved tombs containing the reliques of the great, exceeds credibility. In general, even in the most noble churches, the number of the vulgar dead exceed in all prpportion the few of eminence who are deposited under monuments. Iona is in all respects the reverse; until lately the inhabitants of

Digitized by Google

the isle did not presume to mix their vulgar dust with that of chiefs, reguli, and abbots. The number, therefore, of carved and inscribed tombstones, is quite marvellous, and I can easily credit the story told by Sacheverell, who assures us that 300 inscriptions had been collected, and were lost in the troubles of the 17th century. Even now, many more might be deciphered than have yet been made public, but the rustic step of the peasants and of Sassenach visitants is fast destroying these faint memorials of the valiant of the isles. A skilful antiquary remaining here a week, and having (or assuming) the power of raising the half-sunk monuments, might make a curious collection. We could only gaze and grieve; yet had the day not been Sunday, we would have brought our seamen ashore, and endeavoured to have raised some of these monuments. The celebrated ridges called *Jomaire na'n Righrean*, or Graves of the Kings, can now scarce be said to exist, though their site is still pointed out. Undoubtedly, the thirst of spoil, and the frequent custom of burying treasures with the ancient princes, occasioned their early violation; nor am I any sturdy believer in their being regularly ticketed off by inscriptions into the tombs of the Kings of Scotland, of Ireland, of Norway, and so forth. If such inscriptions ever existed, I should deem them the work of some crafty bishop or abbot, for the credit of his diocese or convent. Macbeth

Digitized by Google

is said to have been the last King of Scotland here buried; sixty preceded him, all doubtless as powerful in their day, but now unknown—*carent quia vate sacro.* A few weeks' labour of Shakspeare, an obscure player, has done more for the memory of Macbeth than all the gifts, wealth, and monuments of this cemetery of princes have been able to secure to the rest of its inhabitants. It also occurred to me in Iona (as it has on many similar occasions) that the traditional recollections concerning the monks themselves are wonderfully faint, contrasted with the beautiful and interesting monuments of architecture which they have left behind them. In Scotland particularly, the people have frequently traditions wonderfully vivid of the persons and achievements of ancient warriors, whose towers have long been levelled with the soil. But of the monks of Melrose, Kelso, Aberbrothock, Iona, &c. &c. &c., they can tell nothing but that such a race existed, and inhabited the stately ruins of these monasteries. The quiet, slow, and uniform life of those recluse beings, glided on, it may be, like a dark and silent stream, fed from unknown resources, and vanishing from the eye without leaving any marked trace of its course. The life of the chieftain was a mountain torrent thundering over rock and precipice, which, less deep and profound in itself, leaves on the minds of the terrified spectators those deep impressions of awe and wonder which are most readily handed down to posterity.

Digitized by Google

"Among the various monuments exhibited at Iona, is one where a Maclean lies in the same grave with one of the Macfies or Macduffies of Colonsay, with whom he had lived in alternate friendship and enmity during their lives. 'He lies above him during death,' said one of Maclean's followers, as his chief was interred, 'as he was above him during life.' There is a very ancient monument lying among those of the Macleans, but perhaps more ancient than any of them; it has a knight riding on horseback, and behind him a minstrel playing on a harp; this is conjectured to be Reginald Macdonald of the Isles, but there seems no reason for disjoining him from his kindred who sleep in the cathedral. A supposed ancestor of the Stewarts, called Paul Purser, or Paul the Purse-bearer (treasurer to the King of Scotland), is said to lie under a stone near the Lords of the Isles. Most of the monuments engraved by Pennant are still in the same state of preservation, as are the few ancient crosses which are left. What a sight Iona must have been, when 360 crosses, of the same size and beautiful workmanship, were ranked upon the little rocky ridge of eminences which form the background to the cathedral! Part of the tower of the cathedral has fallen since I was here. It would require a better architect than I am, to say anything concerning the antiquity of these ruins, but I conceive those of the

Digitized by Google

nunnery and of the *Reilig nan Oran*, or Oran's chapel, are decidedly the most ancient. Upon the cathedral and buildings attached to it, there are marks of repairs at different times, some of them of a late date, being obviously designed not to enlarge the buildings, but to retrench them. We take a reluctant leave of Iona, and go on board.

"The haze and dullness of the atmosphere seem to render it dubious if we can proceed, as we intended, to Staffa to-day—for mist among these islands is rather unpleasant. Erskine reads prayers on deck to all hands, and introduces a very apt allusion to our being now in sight of the first Christian Church from which Revelation was diffused over Scotland and all its islands. There is a very good form of prayer for the Lighthouse Service, composed by the Rev. Mr Brunton.* A pleasure vessel lies under our lee from Belfast, with an Irish party related to Macneil of Colonsay. The haze is fast degenerating into downright rain, and that right heavy—verifying the words of Collins—

> 'And thither where beneath the *showery west*
> The mighty Kings of three fair realms are laid.' †

After dinner, the weather being somewhat cleared,

* The Rev. Alexander Brunton, D.D., now (1836) Professor of Oriental Languages in the University of Edinburgh.

† Ode on the Superstitions of the Highlands.

Digitized by Google

sailed for Staffa, and took boat. The surf running heavy up between the island and the adjacent rock, called Booshala, we landed at a creek near the Cormorant's cave. The mist now returned so thick as to hide all view of Iona, which was our land-mark; and although Duff, Stevenson, and I, had been formerly on the isle, we could not agree upon the proper road to the cave. I engaged myself, with Duff and Erskine, in a clamber of great toil and danger, and which at length brought me to the *Cannon-ball*, as they call a round granite stone moved by the sea up and down in a groove of rock, which it has worn for itself, with a noise resembling thunder. Here I gave up my research, and returned to my companions, who had not been more fortunate. As night was now falling, we resolved to go aboard and postpone the adventure of the enchanted cavern until next day. The yacht came to an anchor with the purpose of remaining off the island all night, but the hardness of the ground, and the weather becoming squally, obliged us to return to our safer mooring at Y-Columb-Kill.

"29*th August* 1814.—Night squally and rainy —morning ditto—we weigh, however, and return toward Staffa, and, very happily, the day clears as we approach the isle. As we ascertained the situation of the cave, I shall only make this memorandum, that when the weather will serve, the best landing is

Digitized by Google

to the lee of Booshala, a little conical islet or rock, composed of basaltic columns placed in an oblique or sloping position. In this way, you land at once on the flat causeway, formed by the heads of truncated pillars, which leads to the cave. But if the state of tide renders it impossible to land under Booshala, then take one of the adjacent creeks; in which case, keeping to the left hand along the top of the ledge of rocks which girdles in the isle, you find a dangerous and precipitous descent to the causeway aforesaid, from the table. Here we were under the necessity of towing our Commodore, Hamilton, whose gallant heart never fails him, whatever the tenderness of his toes may do. He was successfully lowered by a rope down the precipice, and proceeding along the flat terrace or causeway already mentioned, we reached the celebrated cave. I am not sure whether I was not more affected by this second, than by the first view of it. The stupendous columnar side walls — the depth and strength of the ocean with which the cavern is filled — the variety of tints formed by stalactites dropping and petrifying between the pillars, and resembling a sort of chasing of yellow or cream-coloured marble filling the interstices of the roof — the corresponding variety below, where the ocean rolls over a red, and in some places a violet-coloured rock, the basis of the basaltic pillars — the dreadful noise of those august billows so

Digitized by Google

well corresponding with the grandeur of the scene— are all circumstances elsewhere unparalleled. We have now seen in our voyage the three grandest caverns in Scotland, Smowe, Macallister's Cave, and Staffa; so that, like the Troglodytes of yore, we may be supposed to know something of the matter. It is, however, impossible to compare scenes of natures so different, nor, were I compelled to assign a preference to any of the three, could I do it but with reference to their distinct characters, which might affect different individuals in different degrees. The characteristic of the Smowe cave may in this case be called the terrific, for the difficulties which oppose the stranger are of a nature so uncommonly wild as, for the first time at least, convey an impression of terror — with which the scenes to which he is introduced fully correspond. On the other hand, the dazzling whiteness of the incrustations in Macallister's cave, the elegance of the entablature, the beauty of its limpid pool, and the graceful dignity of its arch, render its leading features those of severe and chastened beauty. Staffa, the third of these subterraneous wonders, may challenge sublimity as its principal characteristic. Without the savage gloom of the Smowe cave, and investigated with more apparent ease, though, perhaps, with equal real danger, the stately regularity of its columns forms a contrast to the grotesque imagery of Mac-

Digitized by Google

allister's cave, combining at once the sentiments of grandeur and beauty. The former is, however, predominant, as it must necessarily be in any scene of the kind.

"We had scarce left Staffa when the wind and rain returned. It was Erskine's object and mine to dine at Torloisk on Loch Tua, the seat of my valued friend Mrs Maclean Clephane, and her accomplished daughters. But in going up Loch Tua between Ulva and Mull with this purpose,

> 'So thick was the mist on the ocean green,
> Nor cape nor headland could be seen.'*

It was late before we came to anchor in a small bay presented by the little island of Gometra, which may be regarded as a continuation of Ulva. We therefore dine aboard, and after dinner, Erskine and I take the boat and row across the loch under a heavy rain. We could not see the house of Torloisk, so very thick was the haze, and we were a good deal puzzled how and where to achieve a landing; at length, espying a cart-road, we resolved to trust to its guidance, as we knew we must be near the house. We therefore went ashore with our servants, *à la bonne aventure*, under a drizzling rain. This was soon a matter of little consequence, for the necessity of crossing a swollen brook wetted me considerably,

* "So thick a haze o'erspreads the sky,
They cannot see the Sun on high."
SOUTHEY'S *Inchcape Rock.*

Digitized by Google

and Erskine, whose foot slipped, most completely. In wet and weary plight we reached the house, after a walk of a mile, in darkness, dirt, and rain, and it is hardly necessary to say, that the pleasure of seeing our friends soon banished all recollection of our unpleasant voyage and journey.

"30*th August* 1814.—The rest of our friends come ashore by invitation, and breakfast with the ladies, whose kindness would fain have delayed us for a few days, and at last condescended to ask for one day only—but even this could not be, our time wearing short. Torloisk is finely situated upon the coast of Mull, facing Staffa. It is a good comfortable house, to which Mrs Clephane has made some additions. The grounds around have been dressed, so as to smooth their ruggedness, without destroying the irregular and wild character peculiar to the scene and country. In this, much taste has been displayed. At Torloisk, as at Dunvegan, trees grow freely and rapidly, and the extensive plantations formed by Mrs C. serve to show that nothing but a little expense and patience on the part of the proprietors, with attention to planting in proper places at first, and in keeping up fences afterward, are awanting to remove the reproach of nakedness, so often thrown upon the Western Isles. With planting comes shelter, and the proper allotment and division of fields. With all this Mrs Clephane is busied, and, I trust, successfully; I am sure, actively and usefully. Take

Digitized by Google

leave of my fair friends, with regret that I cannot prolong my stay for a day or two. When we come on board, we learn that Staffa-Macdonald is just come to his house of Ulva; this is a sort of unpleasant dilemma, for we cannot now go there without some neglect towards Mrs Maclean Clephane; and, on the other hand, from his habits with all of us, he may be justly displeased with our quitting his very threshold without asking for him. However, upon the whole matter, and being already under weigh, we judged it best to work out of the loch, and continue our purpose of rounding the northern extremity of Mull, and then running down the Sound between Mull and the mainland. We had not long pursued our voyage before we found it was like to be a very slow one. The wind fell away entirely, and after repeated tacks we could hardly clear the extreme north-western point of Mull by six o'clock — which must have afforded amusement to the ladies whose hospitable entreaties we had resisted, as we were almost all the while visible from Torloisk. A fine evening, but scarce a breath of wind.

"31*st August* 1814. — Went on deck between three and four in the morning, and found the vessel almost motionless in a calm sea, scarce three miles advanced on her voyage. We had, however, rounded the north-western side of Mull, and were advancing

Digitized by Google

between the north-eastern side and the rocky and wild shores of Ardnamurchan on the mainland of Scotland. Astern were visible in bright moonlight the distant mountains of Rum; yet nearer, the remarkable ridge in the Isle of Egg, called Scuir-Egg; and nearest of all the low isle of Muick. After enjoying this prospect for some time, returned to my berth. Rise before eight—a delightful day, but very calm, and the little wind there is decidedly against us. Creeping on slowly, we observe, upon the shore of Ardnamurchan, a large old castle called Mingary. It appears to be surrounded with a very high wall, forming a kind of polygon, in order to adapt itself to the angles of a precipice overhanging the sea, on which the castle is founded. Within or beyond the wall, and probably forming part of an inner court, I observed a steep roof and windows, probably of the 17th century. The whole, as seen with a spyglass, seems ruinous. As we proceed, we open on the left hand Loch Sunart, running deep into the mainland, crossed by distant ridges of rocks, and terminating apparently among the high mountains above Strontian. On the right hand we open the Sound of Mull, and pass the Bloody Bay, which acquired that name from a desperate battle fought between an ancient Lord of the Isles and his son. The latter was assisted by the Macleans of Mull, then in the plenitude of their power, but was defeated. This

Digitized by Google

was a sea-fight; gallies being employed on each side. It has bequeathed a name to a famous pibroch.

"Proceeding southward, we open the beautiful bay of Tobermory, or Mary's Well. The mouth of this fine natural roadstead is closed by an isle called Colvay, having two passages, of which only one, the northerly, is passable for ships. The bay is surrounded by steep hills, covered with copsewood, through which several brooks seek the sea in a succession of beautiful cascades. The village has been established as a fishing station by the Society for British Fisheries. The houses along the quay are two and three stories high, and well built; the feuars paying to the Society sixpence per foot of their line of front. On the top of a steep bank, rising above the first town, runs another line of second-rate cottages, which pay fourpence per foot; and behind are huts, much superior to the ordinary sheds of the country, which pay only twopence per foot. The town is all built upon a regular plan, laid down by the Society. The new part is reasonably clean, and the old not unreasonably dirty. We landed at an excellent quay, which is not yet finished, and found the little place looked thriving and active. The people were getting in their patches of corn; and the shrill voices of the children, attending their parents in the field, and loading the little ponies which are used in transporting the grain, formed a chorus not disagree-

Digitized by Google

able to those whom it reminds of similar sounds at home. The praise of comparative cleanliness does not extend to the lanes around Tobermory, in one of which I had nearly been effectually bogged. But the richness of the round steep green knolls, clothed with copse, and glancing with cascades, and a pleasant peep at a small fresh-water loch embosomed among them—the view of the bay, surrounded and guarded by the island of Colvay—the gliding of two or three vessels in the more distant Sound—and the row of the gigantic Ardnamurchan mountains closing the scene to the north, almost justify the eulogium of Sacheverell, who, in 1688, declared the bay of Tobermory might equal any prospect in Italy. It is said that Sacheverell made some money by weighing up the treasures lost in the Florida, a vessel of the Spanish Armada, which was wrecked in the harbour. He himself affirms, that though the use of the diving-bells was at first successful, yet the attempt was afterwards disconcerted by bad weather.

"Tobermory takes its name from a spring dedicated to the Virgin, which was graced by a chapel; but no vestiges remain of the chapel, and the spring rises in the middle of a swamp, whose depth and dirt discouraged the nearer approach of Protestant pilgrims. Mr Stevenson, whose judgment is unquestionable, thinks that the village should have been built on the island called Colvay, and united to the

Digitized by Google

continent by a key, or causeway, built along the southermost channel, which is very shallow. By this means the people would have been much nearer the fishings, than retired into the depth of the bay.

"About three o'clock we get on board, and a brisk and favourable breeze arises, which carries us smoothly down the Sound. We soon pass Arros, with its fragment of a castle, behind which is the house of Mr Maxwell (an odd name for this country), chamberlain to the Duke of Argyle, which reminds me of much kindness and hospitality received from him and Mr Stewart, the sheriff-substitute, when I was formerly in Mull. On the shore of Morven, on the opposite side, pass the ruins of a small fortalice, called Donagail, situated as usual on a precipice overhanging the sea. The 'woody Morven,' though the quantity of shaggy diminutive copse, which springs up where it obtains any shelter, still shows that it must once have merited the epithet, is now, as visible from the Sound of Mull, a bare country—of which the hills towards the sea have a slope much resembling those in Selkirkshire, and accordingly afford excellent pasture, and around several farm-houses well cultivated and improved fields. I think I observe considerable improvement in husbandry, even since I was here last; but there is a difference in coming from Oban and Cape Wrath.—Open Loch Alline, a beautiful salt-water lake, with

Digitized by Google

a narrow outlet to the Sound. It is surrounded by round hills, sweetly fringed with green copse below, and one of which exhibits to the spy-glass ruins of a castle. There is great promise of beauty in its interior, but we cannot see every thing. The land on the southern bank of the entrance slopes away into a sort of promontory, at the extremity of which are the very imperfect ruins of the castle of Ardtornish, to which the Lords of the Isles summoned parliaments, and from whence one of them dated a treaty with the Crown of England as an independent Prince. These ruins are seen to most advantage from the south, where they are brought into a line with one high fragment towards the west predominating over the rest. The shore of the promontory on the south side becomes rocky, and when it slopes round to the west, rises into a very bold and high precipitous bank, skirting the bay on the western side, partly cliffy, partly covered with brushwood, with various streams dashing over it from a great height. Above the old castle of Ardtornish, and about where the promontory joins the land, stands the present mansion, a neat white-washed house, with several well enclosed and well cultivated fields surrounding it.

"The high and dignified character assumed by the shores of Morven after leaving Ardtornish, continues till we open the Loch Linnhe, the commence-

Digitized by Google

ment of the great chain of inland lakes running up to Fort-William, and which it is proposed to unite with Inverness by means of the Caledonian Canal. The wisdom of the plan adopted in this national measure seems very dubious. Had the Canal been of more moderate depth, and the burdens imposed upon passing vessels less expensive, there can be no doubt that the coasters, sloops, and barks, would have carried on a great trade by means of it. But the expense and plague of locks, &c. may prevent these humble vessels from taking this abridged voyage, while ships above twenty or thirty tons will hesitate to engage themselves in the intricacies of a long lake navigation, exposed, without room for manœuvring, to all the sudden squalls of the mountainous country. Ahead of us, in the mouth of Loch Linnhe, lies the low and fertile isle of Lismore, formerly the appanage of the Bishops of the Isles, who, as usual, knew where to choose church patrimony. The coast of the Mull, on the right hand of the Sound, has a black, rugged, and unimproved character. Above Scallister bay are symptoms of improvement. Moonlight has risen upon us as we pass Duart castle, now an indistinct mass upon its projecting promontory. It was garrisoned for Government so late as 1780, but is now ruinous. We see, at about a mile's distance, the fatal shelve on which Duart exposed the daughter of Argyle, on

Digitized by Google

which Miss Baillie's play of the Family Legend is founded, but now,

> 'Without either sign or sound of their shock,
> The waves flowed over the Lady's rock.' *

The placid state of the sea is very different from what I have seen it, when six stout rowers could scarce give a boat headway through the conflicting tides. These fits of violence so much surprised and offended a body of the Camerons, who were bound upon some expedition to Mull, and had been accustomed to the quietness of lake-navigation, that they drew their dirks, and began to stab the waves — from which popular tale this run of tide is called *the Men of Lochaber*. The weather being delightfully moderate, we agree to hover hereabout all night, or anchor under the Mull shore, should it be necessary, in order to see Dunstaffnage to-morrow morning. The isle of Kerrera is now in sight, forming the bay of Oban. Beyond lie the varied and magnificent summits of the chain of mountains bordering Loch Linnhe, as well as those between Loch Awe and Loch Etive, over which the summit of Ben Cruachan is proudly prominent. Walk on deck, admiring this romantic prospect until ten; then below, and turn in.

"1*st September* 1814. — Rise betwixt six and seven, and having discreetly secured our breakfast,

* SOUTHEY'S *Inchcape Rock.*

Digitized by Google

take boat for the old castle of Dunstaffnage, situated upon a promontory on the side of Loch Linnhe and near to Loch Etive. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the day and of the prospect. We coasted the low, large, and fertile isle of Lismore, where a Catholic Bishop, Chisholm, has established a seminary of young men intended for priests, and what is a better thing, a valuable lime-work. Report speaks well of the lime, but indifferently of the progress of the students. Tacking to the shore of the loch, we land at Dunstaffnage, once, it is said, the seat of the Scottish monarchy, till success over the Picts and Saxons transferred their throne to Scoone, Dunfermline, and at length to Edinburgh. The castle is still the King's (nominally), and the Duke of Argyle (nominally also), is hereditary keeper. But the real right of property is in the family of the depute-keeper, to which it was assigned as an appanage, the first possessor being a natural son of an Earl of Argyle. The shell of the castle, for little more now remains, bears marks of extreme antiquity. It is square in form, with round towers at three of the angles, and is situated upon a lofty precipice, carefully scarped on all sides to render it perpendicular. The entrance is by a staircase, which conducts you to a wooden landing-place in front of the portal-door. This landing-place could formerly be raised at pleasure, being of the nature of

Digitized by Google

a draw-bridge. When raised, the place was inaccessible. You pass under an ancient arch, with a low vault (being the porter's lodge) on the right hand, and flanked by loop-holes, for firing upon any hostile guest who might force his passage thus far. This admits you into the inner-court, which is about eighty feet square. It contains two mean-looking buildings, about sixty or seventy years old; the ancient castle having been consumed by fire in 1715. It is said that the nephew of the proprietor was the incendiary. We went into the apartments, and found they did not exceed the promise of the exterior; but they admitted us to walk upon the battlements of the old castle, which displayed a most splendid prospect. Beneath, and far projected into the loch, were seen the woods and houses of Campbell of Lochnell. A little summer-house, upon an eminence, belonging to this wooded bank, resembles an ancient monument. On the right, Loch Etive, after pouring its waters like a furious cataract over a strait called Connell-ferry, comes between the castle and a round island belonging to its demesne, and nearly insulates the situation. In front is a low rocky eminence on the opposite side of the arm, through which Loch Etive flows into Loch Linnhe. Here was situated *Beregenium*, once, it is said, a British capital city; and, as our informant told us, the largest market-town in Scotland. Of this splen-

Digitized by Google

dour are no remains but a few trenches and excavations, which the distance did not allow us to examine The ancient masonry of Dunstaffnage is mouldering fast under time and neglect. The foundations are beginning to decay, and exhibit gaps between the rock and the wall; and the battlements are become ruinous. The inner court is encumbered with ruins. A hundred pounds or two would put this very ancient fortress in a state of preservation for ages, but I fear this is not to be expected. The stumps of large trees, which had once shaded the vicinity of the castle, gave symptoms of decay in the family of Dunstaffnage. We were told of some ancient spurs and other curiosities preserved in the castle, but they were locked up. In the vicinity of the castle is a chapel which had once been elegant, but by the building up of windows, &c. is now heavy enough. I have often observed that the means adopted in Scotland for repairing old buildings are generally as destructive of their grace and beauty, as if that had been the express object. Unfortunately, most churches, particularly, have gone through both stages of destruction, having been first repaired by the building up of the beautiful shafted windows, and then the roof being suffered to fall in, they became ruins indeed, but without any touch of the picturesque farther than their massive walls and columns may afford. Near the chapel of Dunstaffnage is a remarkable echo.

Digitized by Google

"Re-embarked, and, rowing about a mile and a half or better along the shore of the lake, again landed under the ruins of the old castle of Dunolly. This fortress, which, like that of Dunstaffnage, forms a marked feature in this exquisite landscape, is situated on a bold and precipitous promontory overhanging the lake. The principal part of the ruins now remaining is a square tower or keep of the ordinary size, which had been the citadel of the castle; but fragments of other buildings, overgrown with ivy, show that Dunolly had once been a place of considerable importance. These had enclosed a court-yard, of which the keep probably formed one side, the entrance being by a very steep ascent from the land side, which had formerly been cut across by a deep moat, and defended doubtless by outworks and a drawbridge. Beneath the castle stands the modern house of Dunolly, a decent mansion, suited to the reduced state of the MacDougalls of Lorn, who, from being Barons powerful enough to give battle to and defeat Robert Bruce, are now declined into private gentlemen of moderate fortune.

"This very ancient family is descended from Somerled, Thane, or rather, under that name, *King* of Argyle and the Hebrides. He had two sons, to one of whom he left his insular possessions — and he became founder of the dynasty of the Lords of the Isles, who maintained a stirring independence during

Digitized by Google

the middle ages. The other was founder of the family of the MacDougalls of Lorn. One of them being married to a niece of the Red Cumming, in revenge of his slaughter at Dumfries, took a vigorous part against Robert Bruce in his struggles to maintain the independence of Scotland. At length the King, turning his whole strength towards MacDougall, encountered him at a pass near Loch Awe; but the Highlanders, being possessed of the strong ground, compelled Bruce to retreat, and again gave him battle at Dalry, near Tynedrum, where he had concentrated his forces. Here he was again defeated, and the tradition of the MacDougall family bears, that in the conflict the Lord of Lorn engaged hand to hand with Bruce, and was struck down by that monarch. As they grappled together on the ground, Bruce being uppermost, a vassal of MacDougall, called MacKeoch, relieved his master by pulling Bruce from him. In this close struggle the King left his mantle and brooch in the hands of his enemies, and the latter trophy was long preserved in the family, until it was lost in an accidental fire. Barbour tells the same story, but I think with circumstances somewhat different. When Bruce had gained the throne for which he fought so long, he displayed his resentment against the MacDougalls of Lorn, by depriving them of the greatest part of their domains, which were bestowed chiefly upon

Digitized by Google

the Steward of Scotland. Sir Colin Campbell, the Knight of Loch Awe, and the Knight of Glenurchy, Sir Dugald Campbell, married daughters of the Steward, and received with them great portion of the forfeiture of MacDougall. Bruce even compelled or persuaded the Lord of the Isles to divorce his wife, who was a daughter of MacDougall, and take in marriage a relation of his own. The son of the divorced lady was not permitted to succeed to the principality of the Isles, on account of his connexion with the obnoxious MacDougall. But a large appanage was allowed him upon the Mainland, where he founded the family of Glengarry.

"The family of MacDougall suffered farther reduction during the great civil war, in which they adhered to the Stewarts, and in 1715 they forfeited the small estate of Dunolly, which was then all that remained of what had once been a principality. The then representative of the family fled to France, and his son (father of the present proprietor) would have been without any means of education, but for the spirit of clanship, which induced one of the name, in the humble situation of keeper of a public-house at Dumbarton, to take his young chief to reside with him, and be at the expense of his education and maintenance until his fifteenth or sixteenth year. He proved a clever and intelligent man, and made good use of the education he received. When the affair

Digitized by Google

of 1745 was in agitation. it was expected by the south-western clans that Charles Edward would have landed near Oban, instead of which he disembarked at Loch-nan-augh, in Arisaig. Stuart of Appin sent information of his landing to MacDougall, who gave orders to his brother to hold the clan in readiness to rise, and went himself to consult with the chamberlain of the Earl of Breadalbane, who was also in the secret. He found this person indisposed to rise, alleging that Charles had disappointed them both in the place of landing, and the support he had promised. MacDougall then resolved to play cautious, and went to visit the Duke of Argyle, then residing at Rose neath, probably without any determined purpose as to his future proceedings. While he was waiting the Duke's leisure, he saw a horseman arrive at full gallop, and shortly after, the Duke entering the apartment where MacDougall was, with a map in his hand, requested him, after friendly salutations, to point out Loch-nan-augh on that map. MacDougall instantly saw that the secret of Charles's landing had transpired, and resolved to make a merit of being the first who should give details. The persuasions of the Duke determined him to remain quiet, and the reward was the restoration of the little state of Dunolly, lost by his father in 1715. This gentleman lived to a very advanced stage of life, and was succeeded by Peter MacDougall, Esq. now of Dunolly.

Digitized by Google

I had these particulars respecting the restoration of the estate from a near relation of the family, whom we met at Dunstaffnage.

" The modern house of Dunolly is on the neck of land under the old castle, having on the one hand the lake with its islands and mountains; on the other, two romantic eminences tufted with copeswood, of which the higher is called Barmore, and is now planted. I have seldom seen a more romantic and delightful situation, to which the peculiar state of the family gave a sort of moral interest. Mrs MacDougall, observing strangers surveying the ruins, met us on our return, and most politely insisted upon our accepting fruit and refreshments. This was a a compliment meant to absolute strangers, but when our names became known to her, the good lady's entreaties that we would stay till Mr. MacDougall returned from his ride, became very pressing. She was in deep mourning for the loss of an eldest son, who had fallen bravely in Spain and under Wellington, a death well becoming the descendant of so famed a race. The second son, a lieutenant in the navy, had, upon this family misfortune, obtained leave to visit his parents for the first time after many years' service, but had now returned to his ship. Mrs M. spoke with melancholy pride of the death of her eldest son, with hope and animation of the prospects of the survivor A third is educated for the law. Declining the

Digitized by Google

hospitality offered us, Mrs M. had the goodness to walk with us along the shore towards Oban, as far as the property of Dunolly extends, and showed us a fine spring, called *Tobar nan Gall*, or the Well of the Stranger, where our sailors supplied themselves with excellent water, which has been rather a scarce article with us, as it soon becomes past a landsman's use on board ship. On the sea-shore, about a quarter of a mile from the castle, is a huge fragment of the rock called *plum-pudding stone*, which art or nature has formed into a gigantic pillar. Here it is said Fion or Fingal tied his dog Bran—here also the celebrated Lord of the Isles tied up his dogs when he came upon a visit to the Lords of Lorn. Hence it is called *Clach nan Con; i. e.* the Dog's Stone. A tree grew once on the top of this bare mass of composite stone, but it was cut down by a curious damsel of the family, who was desirous to see a treasure said to be deposited beneath it. Enjoyed a pleasant walk of a mile along the beach to Oban, a town of some consequence, built in a semicircular form, around a good harbour formed by the opposite isle of Kerrara, on which Mrs M. pointed out the place where Alexander II. died, while, at the head of a powerful armament, he meditated the reduction of the Hebrides. The field is still called Dal-ry—the King's field.

" Having taken leave of Mrs MacDougall, we soon

Digitized by Google

satisfied our curiosity concerning Oban, which owed its principal trade to the industry of two brothers, Messrs Stevenson, who dealt in ship-building. One is now dead, the other almost retired from business, and trade is dull in the place. Heard of an active and industrious man, who had set up a nursery of young trees, which ought to succeed, since at present, whoever wants plants must send to Glasgow; and how much the plants suffer during a voyage of such length, any one may conceive. Go on board after a day delightful for the serenity and clearness of the weather, as well as for the objects we had visited. I forgot to say, that through Mr MacDougall's absence we lost an opportunity of seeing a bronze figure of one of his ancestors, called *Bacach*, or the lame, armed and mounted as for a tournament. The hero flourished in the twelfth century. After a grand council of war, we determine, as we are so near the coast of Ulster, that we will stand over and view the celebrated Giant's Causeway; and Captain Wilson receives directions accordingly.

"2*d September* 1814.—Another most beautiful day. The heat, for the first time since we sailed from Leith, is somewhat incommodious; so we spread a handsome awning to save our complexions, God wot, and breakfast beneath it in style. The breeze is gentle, and quite favourable. It has conducted us from the extreme cape of Mull, called the Black

Digitized by Google

Head of Mull, into the Sound of Islay. We view in passing that large and fertile island, the property of Campbell of Shawfield, who has introduced an admirable style of farming among his tenants. Still farther behind us retreats the island of Jura, with the remarkable mountains called the Paps of Jura, which form a landmark at a great distance. They are very high, but in our eyes, so much accustomed of late to immense height, do not excite much surprise. Still farther astern is the small isle of Scarba, which, as we see it, seems to be a single hill. In the passage or sound between Scarba and the extremity of Jura, is a terrible run of tide, which, contending with the sunk rocks and islets of that foul channel, occasions the succession of whirlpools called the Gulf of Corrievreckan. Seen at this distance, we cannot judge of its terrors. The sight of Corrievreckan and of the low rocky isle of Colonsay, betwixt which and Islay we are now passing, strongly recalls to my mind poor John Leyden and his tale of the Mermaid and MacPhail of Colonsay.* Probably the name of the hero should have been MacFie, for to the MacDuffies (by abridgment MacFies) Colonsay of old pertained. It is said the last of these MacDuffies was executed as an oppressor by order of the Lord of the Isles, and lies buried in the adjacent small island of Oransay,

* See Minstrelsy of the Border — Scott's Poetical Works, vol. iv., pp. 285–306.

Digitized by Google

where there is an old chapel with several curious monuments, which, to avoid losing this favourable breeze, we are compelled to leave unvisited. Colonsay now belongs to a gentleman named MacNeil. On the right beyond it, opens at a distance the western coast of Mull, which we already visited in coming from the northward. We see the promontory of Ross, which is terminated by Y-Columb-kill, also now visible. The shores of Loch Tua and Ulva are in the blue distance, with the little archipelago which lies around Staffa. Still farther, the hills of Rum can just be distinguished from the blue sky. We are now arrived at the extreme point of Islay, termed, from the strong tides, the *Runs of Islay*. We here only feel them as a large but soft swell of the sea, the weather being delightfully clear and serene. In the course of the evening we lose sight of the Hebrides, excepting Islay, having now attained the western side of that island.

"3*d September* 1814.—In the morning early, we are of Innistulhan, an islet very like Inchkeith in size and appearance, and, like Inchkeith, displaying a lighthouse. Messrs Hamilton, Duff, and Stevenson, go ashore to visit the Irish lighthouse and compare notes. A fishing-boat comes off with four or five stout lads, without neckerchiefs or hats, and the best of whose joint garments selected would hardly equip an Edinburgh beggar. Buy from this

Digitized by Google

specimen of Paddy in his native land some fine John Dories for threepence each. The mainland of Ireland adjoining to this island (being part of the county of Donegal) resembles Scotland, and though hilly, seems well cultivated upon the whole. A brisk breeze directly against us. We beat to windward by assistance of a strong tide-stream, in order to weather the head of Innishowen, which covers the entrance of Lough Foyle, with the purpose of running up the loch to see Londonderry, so celebrated for its siege in 1689. But short tacks and long tacks were in vain, and at dinner-time, having lost our tide, we find ourselves at all disadvantage both against wind and sea. Much combustion at our meal, and the manœuvres by which we attempted to eat and drink remind me of the enchanted drinking-cup in the old ballad, —

> ' Some shed it on their shoulder,
> Some shed it on their thigh;
> And he that did not hit his mouth
> Was sure to hit his eye.'

In the evening, backgammon and cards are in great request. We have had our guns shotted all this day for fear of the Yankees — a privateer having been seen off Tyree Islands, and taken some vessels — as is reported. — About nine o'clock weather the Innishowen head, and enter the Lough, and fire a gun as a signal for a pilot. The people here are great smugglers; and at the report of the gun, we see

Digitized by Google

several lights on shore disappear.—About the middle of the day too, our appearance (much resembling a revenue cutter) occasioned a smoke being made in the midst of a very rugged cliff on the shore—a signal probably to any of the smugglers' craft that might be at sea. Come to anchor in eight fathom water, expecting our pilot.

"*4th September* 1814.—Waked in the morning with good hope of hearing service in Derry Cathedral, as we had felt ourselves under weigh since daylight; but these expectations vanished when, going on deck, we found ourselves only half-way up Lough Foyle, and at least ten miles from Derry. Very little wind, and that against us; and the navigation both shoally and intricate. Called a council of war; and after considering the difficulty of getting up to Derry, and the chance of being wind-bound when we do get there, we resolve to renounce our intended visit to that town. We had hardly put the ship about, when the Irish Æolus shifted his trumpet, and opposed our exit, as he had formerly been unfavourable to our progress up the lake. At length, we are compelled to betake ourselves to towing, the wind fading into an absolute calm. This gives us time enough to admire the northern, or Donegal, side of Lough Foyle—the other being hidden from us by haze and distance. Nothing can be more favourable than this specimen of Ireland.—A beautiful variety of cultivated slopes, intermixed with banks

Digitized by Google

of wood; rocks skirted with a distant ridge of heathy hills, watered by various brooks; the glens or banks being, in general, planted or covered with copse; and finally, studded by a succession of villas and gentlemen's seats, good farm-houses, and neat white-washed cabins. Some of the last are happily situated upon the verge of the sea, with banks of copse or a rock or two rising behind them, and the white sand in front. The land, in general, seems well cultivated and enclosed—but in some places the enclosures seem too small, and the ridges too crooked, for proper farming. We pass two gentlemen's seats, called White Castle and Red Castle; the last a large good-looking mansion, with trees, and a pretty vale sloping upwards from the sea. As we approach the termination of the Lough, the ground becomes more rocky and barren, and the cultivation interrupted by impracticable patches, which have been necessarily abandoned. Come in view of Green Castle, a large ruinous castle, said to have belonged to the Mac-Williams. The remains are romantically situated upon a green bank sloping down to the sea, and are partly covered with ivy. From their extent, the place must have been a chieftain's residence of the very first consequence. Part of the ruins appear to be founded upon a high red rock, which the eye at first blends with the masonry. To the east of the ruins, upon a cliff overhanging the sea, are a modern fortification and barrack-yard, and beneath, a large

Digitized by Google

battery for protection of the shipping which may enter the Lough; the guns are not yet mounted. The Custom-house boat boards us and confirms the account that American cruisers are upon the coast. Drift out of the Lough, and leave behind us this fine country, all of which belongs in property to Lord Donegal; other possessors only having long leases, as sixty years, or so forth. Red Castle, however, before distinguished as a very good-looking house, is upon a perpetual lease. We discharge our pilot—the gentlemen go ashore with him in the boat, in order to put foot on Irish land. I shall defer that pleasure till I can promise myself something to see. When our gentlemen return, we read prayers on deck. After dinner go ashore at the small fishing-village of Port Rush, pleasantly situated upon a peninsula, which forms a little harbour. Here we are received by Dr Richardson, the inventor of the fiorin-grass (or of some of its excellencies.) He cultivates this celebrated vegetable on a very small scale, his whole farm not exceeding four acres. Here I learn, with inexpressible surprise and distress, the death of one of the most valued of the few friends whom these memoranda might interest.* She was, indeed, a rare example of the soundest good sense, and the most exquisite purity of moral feeling, united with the utmost grace and elegance of personal

* Harriet, Duchess of Buccleuch, died Aug. 24, 1814.

Digitized by Google

beauty, and with manners becoming the most dignified rank in British society. There was a feminine softness in all her deportment, which won universal love, as her firmness of mind and correctness of principle commanded veneration. To her family her loss is inexpressibly great. I know not whether it was the purity of her mind, or the ethereal cast of her features and form, but I could never associate in my mind her idea and that of mortality; so that the shock is the more heavy, as being totally unexpected. God grant comfort to the afflicted survivor and his family!

"*5th September* 1814.—Wake, or rather rise at six, for I have waked the whole night, or fallen into broken sleeps only to be hag-ridden by the nightmare. Go ashore with a heavy heart, to see sights which I had much rather leave alone. Land under Dunluce, a ruined castle built by the MacGilligans, or MacQuillens, but afterwards taken from them by a Macdonnell, ancestor of the Earls of Antrim, and destroyed by Sir John Perrot, Lord-Lieutenant in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. This Macdonnell came from the Hebrides at the head of a Scottish colony. The site of the castle much resembles Dunnottar, but it is on a smaller scale. The ruins occupy perhaps more than an acre of ground, being the level top of a high rock advanced into the sea, by which it is surrounded on three sides, and divided from the mainland by a deep chasm. The access

Digitized by Google

was by a narrow bridge, of which there now remains but a single rib, or ledge, forming a doubtful and a precarious access to the ruined castle. On the outer side of the bridge are large remains of outworks, probably for securing cattle, and for domestic offices —and the vestiges of a chapel. Beyond the bridge are an outer and inner gateway, with their defences. The large gateway forms one angle of the square enclosure of the fortress, and at the other landward angle is built a large round tower. There are vestiges of similar towers occupying the angles of the precipice overhanging the sea. These towers were connected by a curtain, on which artillery seems to have been mounted. Within this circuit are the ruins of an establishment of feudal grandeur on the large scale. The great hall, forming, it would seem. one side of the inner court, is sixty paces long, lighted by windows which appear to have been shafted with stone, but are now ruined. Adjacent are the great kitchen and ovens, with a variety of other buildings, but no square tower, or keep. The most remarkable part of Dunluce, however, is, that the whole mass of plum-pudding rock on which the fort is built is completely perforated by a cave sloping downwards from the inside of the moat or dry-ditch beneath the bridge, and opening to the sea on the other side. It might serve the purpose of a small harbour, especially if they had, as is believed, a descent to the cave from within the castle. It

Digitized by Google

is difficult to conceive the use of the aperture to the land, unless it was in some way enclosed and defended. Above the ruinous castle is a neat farm-house. Mrs More, the good-wife, a Scoto-Hibernian, received us with kindness and hospitality which did honour to the nation of her birth, as well as of her origin, in a house whose cleanliness and neatness might have rivalled England. Her churn was put into immediate motion on our behalf, and we were loaded with all manner of courtesy, as well as good things. We heard here of an armed schooner having been seen off the coast yesterday, which fired on a boat that went off to board her, and would seem therefore to be a privateer, or armed smuggler.

" Return on board for breakfast, and then again take boat for the Giant's Causeway — having first shotted the guns, and agreed on a signal, in case this alarming stranger should again make his appearance. Visit two caves, both worth seeing, but not equal to those we have seen; one, called Port Coon, opens in a small cove, or bay — the outer reach opens into an inner cave, and that again into the sea. The other, called Down Kerry, is a sea-cave, like that on the eastern side of Loch Eribol — a high arch up which the sea rolls: — the weather being quiet we sailed in very nearly to the upper end. We then rowed on to the celebrated Causeway, a platform composed of basaltic pillars, projecting into the sea

Digitized by Google

like the pier of a harbour. As I was tired, and had a violent headache, I did not land, but could easily see that the regularity of the columns was the same as at Staffa; but that island contains a much more extensive and curious specimen of this curious phenomenon.

"Row along the shores of this celebrated point, which are extremely striking as well as curious. They open into a succession of little bays, each of which has precipitous banks graced with long ranges of the basaltic pillars, sometimes placed above each other, and divided by masses of interweaving strata, or by green sloping banks of earth of extreme steepness. These remarkable ranges of columns are in some places chequered by horizontal strata of a red rock or earth, of the appearance of ochre; so that the green of the grassy banks, the dark-grey or black appearance of the columns, with those red seams and other varieties of the interposed strata, have most uncommon and striking effects. The outline of these cliffs is as singular as their colouring. In several places the earth has wasted away from single columns, and left them standing insulated and erect, like the ruined colonnade of an ancient temple, upon the verge of the precipice. In other places, the disposition of the basaltic ranges presents singular appearances, to which the guides give names agreeable to the images which they are supposed to represent.

Digitized by Google

Each of the little bays or inlets has also its appropriate name. One is called the Spanish Bay, from one of the Spanish Armada having been wrecked there. Thus our voyage has repeatedly traced the memorable remnants of that celebrated squadron. The general name of the cape adjacent to the Causeway, is Bengore Head. To those who have seen Staffa, the peculiar appearance of the Causeway itself will lose much of its effect; but the grandeur of the neighbouring scenery will still maintain the reputation of Bengore Head. The people ascribe all these wonders to Fin MacCoul, whom they couple with a Scottish giant called Ben-an something or other. The traveller is plied by guides, who make their profit by selling pieces of crystal, agate, or chalcedony, found in the interstices of the rocks. Our party brought off some curious joints of the columns, and, had I been quite as I am wont to be, I would have selected four to be capitals of a rustic porch at Abbotsford. But, alas! alas! I am much out of love with vanity at this moment. From what we hear at the Causeway, we have every reason to think that the pretended privateer has been a gentleman's pleasure-vessel. — Continue our voyage southward, and pass between the Main of Ireland and the Isle of Rachrin, a rude heathy-looking island, once a place of refuge to Robert Bruce. This is said, in ancient times, to have been the abode of banditti, who plun-

Digitized by Google

dered the neighbouring coast. At present it is under a long lease to a Mr Gage, who is said to maintain excellent order among the islanders. Those of bad character he expels to Ireland, and hence it is a phrase among the people of Rachrin, when they wish ill to any one, '*May Ireland be his hinder end.*' On the Main we see the village of Ballintry, and a number of people collected, the remains of an Irish fair. Close by is a small island, called Sheep Island. We now take leave of the Irish coast, having heard nothing of its popular complaints, excepting that the good lady at Dunluce made a heavy moan against the tithes, which had compelled her husband to throw his whole farm into pasture. Stand over toward Scotland, and see the Mull of Cantyre light.

"*6th September* 1814.—Under the lighthouse at the Mull of Cantyre; situated on a desolate spot among rocks, like a Chinese pagoda in Indian drawings. Duff and Stevenson go ashore at six Hamilton follows, but is unable to land, the sea having got up. The boat brings back letters, and I have the great comfort to learn all are well at Abbotsford. About eight the tide begins to run very strong, and the wind rising at the same time, makes us somewhat apprehensive for our boat, which had returned to attend D. and S. We observe them set off along the hills on foot, to walk, as we understand, to a bay called Carskey, five or six miles off, but the

Digitized by Google

nearest spot at which they can hope to re-embark in this state of the weather. It now becomes very squally, and one of our jibsails splits. We are rather awkwardly divided into three parties — the pedestrians on shore, with whom we now observe Captain Wilson, mounted upon a pony — the boat with four sailors, which is stealing along in-shore, unable to row, and scarce venturing to carry any sail — and we in the yacht, tossing about most exceedingly. At length we reach Carskey, a quiet-looking bay, where the boat gets into shore, and fetches off our gentlemen. After this the coast of Cantyre seems cultivated and arable, but bleak and unenclosed, like many other parts of Scotland. We then learn that we have been repeatedly in the route of two American privateers, who have made many captures in the Irish Channel, particularly at Innistruhul, at the back of Islay, and on the Lewis. They are the Peacock, of twenty-two guns, and 165 men, and a schooner of eighteen guns, called the Prince of Neuchatel. These news, added to the increasing inclemency of the weather, induce us to defer a projected visit to the coast of Galloway; and indeed it is time one of us was home on many accounts. We therefore resolve, after visiting the lighthouse at Pladda, to proceed for Greenock. About four drop anchor off Pladda, a small islet lying on the south side of Arran. Go ashore and visit the establish-

Digitized by Google

ment. When we return on board, the wind being unfavourable for the mouth of Clyde, we resolve to weigh anchor and go into Lamlash Bay.

"*7th September* 1814.—We had amply room to repent last night's resolution, for the wind, with its usual caprice, changed so soon as we had weighed anchor, blew very hard, and almost directly against us, so that we were beating up against it by short tacks, which made a most disagreeable night; as, between the noise of the wind and the sea, the clattering of the ropes and sails above, and of the moveables below, and the eternal '*ready about*,' which was repeated every ten minutes when the vessel was about to tack, with the lurch and clamour which succeeds, sleep was much out of the question. We are not now in the least sick, but want of sleep is uncomfortable, and I have no agreeable reflections to amuse waking hours, excepting the hope of again rejoining my family. About six o'clock went on deck to see Lamlash Bay, which we have at length reached after a hard struggle. The morning is fine and the wind abated, so that the coast of Arran looks extremely well. It is indented with two deep bays. That called Lamlash, being covered by an island with an entrance at either end, makes a secure roadstead. The other bay, which takes its name from Brodick Castle, a seat of the Duke of Hamilton, is open. The situation of the castle is very

Digitized by Google

fine, among extensive plantations, laid out with perhaps too much formality, but pleasant to the eye, as the first tract of plantation we have seen for a long time. One stripe, however, with singular want of taste, runs straight up a finely rounded hill, and turning by an obtuse angle, cuts down the opposite side with equal lack of remorse. This vile habit of opposing the line of the plantation to the natural line and bearing of the ground, is one of the greatest practical errors of early planters. As to the rest, the fields about Brodick, and the lowland of Arran in general, seem rich, well enclosed, and in good cultivation. Behind and around rise an amphitheatre of mountains, the principal a long ridge with fine swelling serrated tops, called Goat-Fell. Our wind now altogether dies away, while we want its assistance to get to the mouth of the Firth of Clyde, now opening between the extremity of the large and fertile Isle of Bute, and the lesser islands called the Cumbrays. The fertile coast of Ayrshire trends away to the south-westward, displaying many villages, and much appearance of beauty and cultivation. On the north-eastward arises the bold and magnificent screen formed by the mountains of Argyleshire and Dumbartonshire, rising above each other in gigantic succession. About noon a favourable breath of wind enables us to enter the mouth of the Clyde, passing between the larger Cumbray and the extremity of

Digitized by Google

Bute. As we advance beyond the Cumbray, and open the opposite coast, see Largs, renowned for the final defeat of the Norwegian invaders by Alexander III. [A. D. 1263.] The ground of battle was a sloping, but rather gentle, ascent from the sea, above the modern Kirk of Largs. Had Haco gained the victory, it would have opened all the south-west of Scotland to his arms. On Bute, a fine and well-improved island, we open the Marquis of Bute's house of Mount Stewart, neither apparently large nor elegant in architecture, but beautifully situated among well-grown trees, with an open and straight avenue to the sea-shore. The whole isle is prettily varied by the rotation of crops: and the rocky ridges of Goat-Fell and other mountains in Arran are now seen behind Bute as a background. These ridges resemble much the romantic and savage outline of the mountains of Cullin, in Skye. On the southward of Largs is Kelburn, the seat of Lord Glasgow, with extensive plantations; on the northward Skelmorlie, an ancient seat of the Montgomeries. The Firth, closed to appearance by Bute and the Cumbrays, now resembles a long irregular inland lake, bordered on the one side by the low and rich coast of Renfrewshire, studded with villages and seats, and on the other by the Highland mountains. Our breeze dies totally away, and leaves us to admire this prospect till sunset. I learn incidentally, that, in

Digitized by Google

the opinion of honest Captain Wilson, I have been myself the cause of all this contradictory weather. 'It is all,' says the Captain to Stevenson, 'owing to the cave at the Isle of Egg,' — from which I had abstracted a skull. Under this odium I may labour yet longer, for assuredly the weather has been doggedly unfavourable. Night quiet and serene, but dead calm — a fine contrast to the pitching, rolling, and walloping of last night.

"8*th September*. — Waked very much in the same situation — a dead calm, but the weather very serene. With much difficulty, and by the assistance of the tide, we advanced up the Firth, and passing the village of Gourock at length reached Greenock. Took an early dinner, and embarked in the steam-boat for Glasgow. We took leave of our little yacht under the repeated cheers of the sailors, who had been much pleased with their erratic mode of travelling about, so different from the tedium of a regular voyage. After we reached Glasgow — a journey which we performed at the rate of about eight miles an hour, and with a smoothness of motion which probably resembles flying — we supped together and prepared to separate. — Erskine and I go to-morrow to the Advocate's at Killermont, and thence to Edinburgh. So closes my journal. But I must not omit to say, that among five or six persons, some of whom were doubtless different in tastes and pursuits, there

Digitized by Google

did not occur, during the close communication of more than six weeks aboard a small vessel, the slightest difference of opinion. Each seemed anxious to submit his own wishes to those of his friends. The consequence was, that by judicious arrangement all were gratified in their turn, and frequently he who made some sacrifices to the views of his companions, was rewarded by some unexpected gratification calculated particularly for his own amusement. Thus ends my little excursion, in which, bating one circumstance, which must have made me miserable for the time wherever I had learned it, I have enjoyed as much pleasure as in any six weeks of my life. We had constant exertion, a succession of wild and uncommon scenery, good humour on board, and objects of animation and interest when we went ashore —

'Sed fugit interea—fugit irrevocabile tempus.'

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Letter in Verse from Zetland and Orkney — Death of the Duchess of Buccleuch — Correspondence with the Duke — Altrive Lake — Negotiation concerning the Lord of the Isles completed — Success of Waverley — Contemporaneous Criticisms on the Novel — Letters to Scott from Mr Morritt — Mr Lewis — and Miss Maclean Clephane — Letter from James Ballantyne to Miss Edgeworth.

1814.

I QUESTION if any man ever drew his own character more fully or more pleasingly than Scott has done in the preceding diary of a six weeks' pleasure voyage. We have before us, according to the scene and occasion, the poet, the antiquary, the magistrate, the planter, and the agriculturist; but everywhere the warm yet sagacious philanthropist — everywhere the

Digitized by Google

courtesy, based on the unselfishness, of the thoroughbred gentleman;—and surely never was the tenderness of a manly heart portrayed more touchingly than in the closing pages. I ought to mention that Erskine received the news of the Duchess of Buccleuch's death on the day when the party landed at Dunstaffnage; but, knowing how it would affect Scott, took means to prevent its reaching him until the expedition should be concluded. He heard the event casually mentioned by a stranger during dinner at Port Rush, and was for the moment quite overpowered.

Of the letters which Scott wrote to his friends during those happy six weeks, I have recovered only one, and it is, thanks to the leisure of the yacht, in verse. The strong and easy heroics of the first section prove, I think, that Mr Canning did not err when he told him that if he chose he might emulate even Dryden's command of that noble measure; and the dancing anapæsts of the second, show that he could with equal facility have rivalled the gay graces of Cotton, Anstey, or Moore. This epistle did not reach the Duke of Buccleuch till his lovely Duchess was no more; and I shall annex to it some communications relating to that affliction, which afford a contrast, not less interesting than melancholy, to the light-hearted glee reflected in the rhymes from the region of Magnus Troil.

Digitized by Google

To his Grace the Duke of Buccleuch, &c. &c. &c.

"Lighthouse Yacht in the Sound of Lerwick,
Zetland, 8th August 1814.

"Health to the chieftain from his clansman true!
From her true minstrel, health to fair Buccleuch!
Health from the isles, where dewy Morning weaves
Her chaplet with the tints that Twilight leaves;
Where late the sun scarce vanished from the sight,
And his bright pathway graced the short-lived night,
Though darker now as autumn's shades extend,
The north winds whistle and the mists ascend!—
Health from the land where eddying whirlwinds toss
The storm-rocked *cradle* of the Cape of Noss;
On outstretched cords the giddy engine slides,
His own strong arm the bold adventurer guides,
And he that lists such desperate feat to try,
May, like the sea-mew, skim 'twixt surf and sky,
And feel the mid-air gales around him blow,
And see the billows rage five hundred feet below.

"Here by each stormy peak and desert shore,
The hardy islesman tugs the daring oar,
Practised alike his venturous course to keep,
Through the white breakers or the pathless deep,
By ceaseless peril and by toil to gain
A wretched pittance from the niggard main.
And when the worn-out drudge old ocean leaves,
What comfort greets him, and what hut receives?
Lady! the worst your presence ere has cheered
(When want and sorrow fled as you appeared)
Were to a Zetlander as the high dome
Of proud Drumlanrig to my humble home.

Digitized by Google

Here rise no groves, and here no gardens blow,
Here even the hardy heath scarce dares to grow;
But rocks on rocks, in mist and storm arrayed,
Stretch far to sea their giant colonnade,
With many a cavern seam'd, the dreary haunt
Of the dun seal and swarthy cormorant.
Wild round their rifted brows with frequent cry,
As of lament, the gulls and gannets fly,
And from their sable base, with sullen sound,
In sheets of whitening foam the waves rebound.

" Yet even these coasts a touch of envy gain
From those whose land has known oppression's chain;
For here the industrious Dutchman comes once more
To moor his fishing craft by Bressay's shore;
Greets every former mate and brother tar,
Marvels how Lerwick 'scaped the rage of war,
Tells many a tale of Gallic outrage done,
And ends by blessing God and Wellington.
Here too the Greenland tar, a fiercer guest,
Claims a brief hour of riot, not of rest;
Proves each wild frolic that in wine has birth,
And wakes the land with brawls and boisterous mirth.
A sadder sight on yon poor vessel's prow
The captive Norse-man sits in silent wo,
And eyes the flags of Britain as they flow.
Hard fate of war, which bade her terrors sway
His destined course, and seize so mean a prey;
A bark with planks so warp'd and seams so riven,
She scarce might face the gentlest airs of heaven:
Pensive he sits, and questions oft if none
Can list his speech and understand his moan;
In vain — no islesman now can use the tongue
Of the bold Norse, from whom their lineage sprung.

Digitized by Google

Not thus of old the Norse-men hither came,
Won by the love of danger or of fame;
On every storm-beat cape a shapeless tower
Tells of their wars, their conquests, and their power;
For ne'er for Grecia's vales, nor Latian land,
Was fiercer strife than for this barren strand;
A race severe — the isle and ocean lords,
Loved for its own delight the strife of swords;
With scornful laugh the mortal pang defied,
And blest their gods that they in battle died.

"Such were the sires of Zetland's simple race,
And still the eye may faint resemblance trace
In the blue eye, tall form, proportion fair,
The limbs athletic, and the long light hair—
(Such was the mien, as Scald and Minstrel sings,
Of fair-haired Harold, first of Norway's Kings);
But their high deeds to scale these crags confined,
Their only warfare is with waves and wind.

"Why should I talk of Mousa's castled coast?
Why of the horrors of the Sumburgh Rost?
May not these bald disjointed lines suffice,
Penn'd while my comrades whirl the rattling dice —
While down the cabin skylight lessening shine
The rays, and eve is chased with mirth and wine?
Imagined, while down Mousa's desert bay
Our well-trimm'd vessel urged her nimble way,
While to the freshening breeze she leaned her side,
And bade her bowsprit kiss the foamy tide?

"Such are the lays that Zetland Isles supply;
Drenched with the drizzly spray and dropping sky,
Weary and wet, a sea-sick minstrel I.—— W. Scott."

Digitized by Google

"POSTSCRIPTUM.

"Kirkwall, Orkney, Aug. 13, 1814.

"In respect that your Grace has commissioned a Kraken,
You will please be informed that they seldom are taken;
It is January two years, the Zetland folks say,
Since they saw the last Kraken in Scalloway bay;
He lay in the offing a fortnight or more,
But the devil a Zetlander put from the shore,
Though bold in the seas of the North to assail
The morse and the sea-horse, the grampus and whale.
If your Grace thinks I'm writing the thing that is not,
You may ask at a namesake of ours, Mr Scott—
(He's not from our clan, though his merits deserve it,
But springs, I'm informed, from the Scotts of Scotstarvet;)*
He questioned the folks who beheld it with eyes,
But they differed confoundedly as to its size.
For instance, the modest and diffident swore
That it seemed like the keel of a ship, and no more—
Those of eyesight more clear, or of fancy more high,
Said it rose like an island 'twixt ocean and sky—
But all of the hulk had a steady opinion
That 'twas sure a *live* subject of Neptune's dominion—
And I think, my Lord Duke, your Grace hardly would wish,
To cumber your house, such a kettle of fish.
Had your order related to night-caps or hose,
Or mittens of worsted, there's plenty of those.
Or would you be pleased but to fancy a whale?
And direct me to send it—by sea or by mail?
The season, I'm told, is nigh over, but still
I could get you one fit for the lake at Bowhill.

* The Scotts of Scotstarvet, and other families of the name in Fife and elsewhere, claim no kindred with the great clan of the Border—and their armorial bearings are different.

Digitized by Google

Indeed, as to whales, there's no need to be thrifty,
Since one day last fortnight two hundred and fifty,
Pursued by seven Orkneymen's boats and no more,
Betwixt Truffness and Luffness were drawn on the shore!
You'll ask if I saw this same wonderful sight;
I own that I did not, but easily might—
For this mighty shoal of leviathans lay
On our lee-beam a mile, in the loop of the bay,
And the islesmen of Sanda were all at the spoil,
And *flinching* (so term it) the blubber to boil;
(Ye spirits of lavender, drown the reflection
That awakes at the thoughts of this odorous dissection.)
To see this huge marvel full fain would we go,
But Wilson, the wind, and the current, said no.
We have now got to Kirkwall, and needs I must stare
When I think that in verse I have once called it *fair*;
'Tis a base little borough, both dirty and mean —
There is nothing to hear, and there's nought to be seen,
Save a church, where, of old times, a prelate harangued,
And a palace that's built by an earl that was hanged.
But farewell to Kirkwall — aboard we are going,
The anchor's a-peak and the breezes are blowing;
Our commodore calls all his band to their places,
And 'tis time to release you — good night to your Graces!"

"*To His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch, &c.*

"Glasgow, Sept. 8, 1814.

"My Dear Lord Duke,

"I take the earliest opportunity, after landing, to discharge a task so distressing to me, that I find reluctance and fear even in making the attempt, and

Digitized by Google

for the first time address so kind and generous a friend without either comfort and confidence in myself, or the power of offering a single word of consolation to his affliction. I learned the late calamitous news (which indeed no preparation could have greatly mitigated) quite unexpectedly, when upon the Irish coast; nor could the shock of an earthquake have affected me in the same proportion. Since that time I have been detained at sea, thinking of nothing but what has happened, and of the painful duty I am now to perform. If the deepest interest in this inexpressible loss could qualify me for expressing myself upon a subject so distressing, I know few whose attachment and respect for the lamented object of our sorrows can, or ought to exceed my own, for never was more attractive kindness and condescension displayed by one of her sphere, or returned with deeper and more heart-felt gratitude by one in my own. But selfish regret and sorrow, while they claim a painful and unavailing ascendance, cannot drown the recollection of the virtues lost to the world, just when their scene of acting had opened wider, and to her family when the prospect of their speedy entry upon life rendered her precept and example peculiarly important. And such an example! for of all whom I have ever seen, in whatever rank, she possessed most the power of rendering virtue lovely—combining purity of feeling and soundness

Digitized by Google

of judgment with a sweetness and affability which won the affections of all who had the happiness of approaching her. And this is the partner of whom it has been God's pleasure to deprive your Grace, and the friend for whom I now sorrow, and shall sorrow while I can remember any thing. The recollection of her excellencies can but add bitterness, at least in the first pangs of calamity, yet it is impossible to forbear the topic; it runs to my pen as to my thoughts, till I almost call in question, for an instant, the Eternal Wisdom which has so early summoned her from this wretched world, where pain and grief and sorrow is our portion, to join those to whom her virtues, while upon earth, gave her so strong a resemblance. Would to God I could say, *be comforted;* but I feel every common topic of consolation must be, for the time at least, even an irritation to affliction. Grieve then, my dear Lord, or I should say my dear and much honoured friend, for sorrow for the time levels the highest distinctions of rank; but do not grieve as those who have no hope. I know the last earthly thoughts of the departed sharer of your joys and sorrows must have been for your Grace and the dear pledges she has left to your care. Do not, for their sake, suffer grief to take that exclusive possession which disclaims care for the living, and is not only useless to the dead, but is what their wishes

Digitized by Google

would have most earnestly deprecated. To time, and to God, whose are both time and eternity, belongs the office of future consolation; it is enough to require from the sufferer under such a dispensation to bear his burthen of sorrow with fortitude, and to resist those feelings which prompt us to believe that that which is galling and grievous is therefore altogether beyond our strength to support. Most bitterly do I regret some levity which I fear must have reached you when your distress was most poignant, and most dearly have I paid for venturing to anticipate the time which is not ours, since I received these deplorable news at the very moment when I was collecting some trifles that I thought might give satisfaction to the person whom I so highly honoured, and who, among her numerous excellencies, never failed to seem pleased with what she knew was meant to afford her pleasure.

"But I must break off, and have perhaps already written too much. I learn by a letter from Mrs Scott, this day received, that your Grace is at Bowhill—in the beginning of next week I will be in the vicinity—and when your Grace can receive me without additional pain, I shall have the honour of waiting upon you. I remain, with the deepest sympathy, my Lord Duke, your Grace's truly distressed and most grateful servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

Digitized by Google

The following letter was addressed to Scott by the Duke of Buccleuch, before he received that which the Poet penned on landing at Glasgow. I present it here, because it will give a more exact notion of what Scott's relations with his noble patron really were, than any other single document which I could produce: and to set that matter in its just light, is essential to the business of this narrative. But I am not ashamed to confess that I embrace with satisfaction the opportunity of thus offering to the readers of the present time a most instructive lesson. They will here see what pure and simple virtues and humble piety may be cultivated as the only sources of real comfort in this world and consolation in the prospect of futurity,—among circles which the giddy and envious mob are apt to regard as intoxicated with the pomps and vanities of wealth and rank; which so many of our popular writers represent systematically as sunk in selfish indulgence —as viewing all below them with apathy and indifference—and last, not least, as upholding, when they do uphold, the religious institutions of their country, merely because they have been taught to believe that their own hereditary privileges and possessions derive security from the prevalence of Christian maxims and feelings among the mass of the people.

Digitized by Google

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Post Office, Greenock.*

"Bowhill, Sept. 3, 1814.

"My Dear Sir,

"It is not with the view of distressing you with my griefs, in order to relieve my own feelings, that I address you at this moment. But knowing your attachment to myself, and more particularly the real affection which you bore to my poor wife, I thought that a few lines from me would be acceptable, both to explain the state of my mind at present, and to mention a few circumstances connected with that melancholy event.

"I am calm and resigned. The blow was so severe that it stunned me, and I did not feel that agony of mind which might have been expected. I now see the full extent of my misfortune; but that extended view of it has come gradually upon me. I am fully aware how imperative it is upon me to exert myself to the utmost on account of my children. I must not depress their spirits by a display of my own melancholy feelings. I have many new duties to perform,—or rather, perhaps, I now feel more pressingly the obligation of duties which the unceasing exertions of my poor wife rendered less necessary, or induced me to attend to with less than sufficient accuracy. I have been taught a severe lesson; it

Digitized by Google

may and ought to be a useful one. I feel that my lot, though a hard one, is accompanied by many alleviations denied to others. I have a numerous family, thank God, in health, and profiting, according to their different ages, by the admirable lessons they have been taught. My daughter, Anne, worthy of so excellent a mother, exerts herself to the utmost to supply her place, and has displayed a fortitude and strength of mind beyond her years, and (as I had foolishly thought) beyond her powers. I have most kind friends willing and ready to afford me every assistance. These are my wordly comforts, and they are numerous and great.

"Painful as it may be, I cannot reconcile it to myself to be totally silent as to the last scene of this cruel tragedy. As she had lived, so she died—an example of every noble feeling—of love, attachment, and the total want of everything selfish. Endeavouring to the last to conceal her suffering, she evinced a fortitude, a resignation, a Christian courage, beyond all power of description. Her last injunction was to attend to her poor people. It was a dreadful but instructive moment. I have learned that the most truly heroic spirit may be lodged in the tenderest and the gentlest breast. Need I tell *you* that she expired in the full hope and expectation, nay, in the firmest certainty, of passing to a better world, through a steady reliance on her

Digitized by Google

Saviour. If ever there was a proof of the efficacy of our religion in moments of the deepest affliction, and in the hour of death, it was exemplified in her conduct. But I will no longer dwell upon a subject which must be painful to you. Knowing her sincere friendship for you, I have thought it would give you pleasure, though a melancholy one, to hear from me that her last moments were such as to be envied by every lover of virtue, piety, and true and genuine religion.

"I will endeavour to do in all things what I know she would wish. I have therefore determined to lay myself open to all the comforts my friends can afford me. I shall be most happy to cultivate their society as heretofore. I shall love them more and more, because I know they loved her. Whenever it suits your convenience I shall be happy to see you here. I feel that it is particularly my duty not to make my house the house of mourning to my children; for I know it was *her* decided opinion that it is most mischievous to give an early impression of gloom to the mind.

"You will find me tranquil, and capable of going through the common occupations of society. Adieu for the present. Yours very sincerely,

BUCCLEUCH, &c."

Digitized by Google

"*To His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch, &c. &c. &c.*

"Edinburgh, 11th Sept. 1814.

"My Dear Lord Duke,

"I received your letter (which had missed me at Greenock) upon its being returned to this place, and cannot sufficiently express my gratitude for the kindness which, at such a moment, could undertake the task of writing upon such a subject to relieve the feelings of a friend. Depend upon it, I am so far worthy of your Grace's kindness, that, among many proofs of it, this affecting and most distressing one can never be forgotten. It gives me great though melancholy satisfaction, to find that your Grace has had the manly and Christian fortitude to adopt that resigned and patient frame of spirit, which can extract from the most bitter calamity a wholesome mental medicine. I trust in God, that, as so many and such high duties are attached to your station, and as he has blessed you with the disposition that draws pleasure from the discharge of them, your Grace will find your first exertions, however painful, rewarded with strength to persevere, and finally with that comfort which attends perseverance in that which is right. The happiness of hundreds depends upon your Grace almost directly, and the effect of your example in the country, and of your constancy

Digitized by Google

in support of a constitution daily undermined by the wicked and designing, is almost incalculable. Justly, then, and well, has your Grace resolved to sacrifice all that is selfish in the indulgence of grief, to the duties of your social and public situation. Long may you have health and strength to be to your dear and hopeful family an example and guide in all that becomes their high rank. It is enough that one light, and alas, what a light that was! has been recalled by the Divine Will to another and a better sphere.

"I wrote a hasty and unconnected letter immediately on landing. I am detained for two days in this place, but shall wait upon your Grace immediately on my return to Abbotsford. If my society cannot, in the circumstances, give much pleasure, it will, I trust, impose no restraint.

"Mrs Scott desires me to offer her deepest sympathy upon this calamitous occasion. She has much reason, for she has lost the countenance of a friend such as she cannot expect the course of human life again to supply. I am ever, with much and affectionate respect, your Grace's truly faithful humble servant, WALTER SCOTT."

Digitized by Google

" *To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., M.P., Worthing.*

" Edinburgh, September 14, 1814.

" My Dear Morritt,

" ' At the end of my tour on the 22d August'!!! Lord help us! — this comes of going to the Levant and the Hellespont, and your Euxine, and so forth. A poor devil who goes to Nova Zembla and Thule is treated as if he had been only walking as far as Barnard Castle or Cauldshiel's Loch.* I would have

* Lord Byron writes to Mr Moore, August 3, 1814 — " Oh! I have had the most amusing letter from Hogg, the Ettrick Minstrel and Shepherd. I think very highly of him as a poet, but he and half of these Scotch and Lake troubadours are spoilt by living in little circles and petty coteries. London and the world is the only place to take the conceit out of a man — in the milling phrase. Scott, he says, is gone to the Orkneys in a gale of wind, during which wind, he affirms, the said Scott he is sure is not at his ease, to say the least of it. Lord! Lord! if these home-keeping minstrels had crossed your Atlantic or my Mediterranean, and tasted a little open boating in a white squall — or a gale in 'the Gut,'— or the bay of Biscay, with no gale at all— how it would enliven and introduce them to a few of the sensations! — to say nothing of an illicit amour or two upon shore, in the way of Essay upon the Passions, beginning with simple adultery, and compounding it as they went along." *Life and Works*, vol. iii. p. 102. Lord Byron, by the way, had written on July the 24th to Mr Murray, " Waverley is the best and most interesting novel I have redde since — I don't know when," &c. *Ibid. p.* 98.

Digitized by Google

you to know I only returned on the 10th current, and the most agreeable thing I found was your letter. I am sure you must know I had need of something pleasant, for the news of the death of the beautiful, the kind, the affectionate, and generous Duchess of Buccleuch gave me a shock, which, to speak God's truth, could not have been exceeded unless by my own family's sustaining a similar deprivation. She was indeed a light set upon a hill, and had all the grace which the most accomplished manners and the most affable address could give to those virtues by which she was raised still higher than by rank. As she always distinguished me by her regard and confidence, and as I had many opportunities of seeing her in the active discharge of duties in which she rather resembled a descended angel than an earthly being, you will excuse my saying so much about my own feelings on an occasion where sorrow has been universal. But I will drop the subject. The survivor has displayed a strength and firmness of mind seldom equalled, where the affection has been so strong and mutual, and amidst the very high station and commanding fortune which so often render self-control more difficult, because so far from being habitual. I trust, for his own sake, as well as for that of thousands to whom his life is directly essential, and hundreds of thousands to whom his example is important, that God, as he has given him fortitude

Digitized by Google

to bear this inexpressible shock, will add strength of constitution to support him in the struggle. He has written to me on the occasion in a style becoming a man and a Christian, submissive to the will of God, and willing to avail himself of the consolations which remain among his family and friends. I am going to see him, and how we shall meet, God knows; but though 'an iron man of iron mould' upon many of the occasions of life in which I see people most affected, and a peculiar contemner of the commonplace sorrow which I see paid to the departed, this is a case in which my stoicism will not serve me. They both gave me reason to think they loved me, and I returned their regard with the most sincere attachment — the distinction of rank being, I think, set apart on all sides. But God's will be done. I will dwell no longer upon this subject. It is much to learn that Mrs Morritt is so much better, and that if I have sustained a severe wound from a quarter so little expected, I may promise myself the happiness of your dear wife's recovery.

"I will shortly mention the train of our voyage, reserving particulars till another day. We sailed from Leith, and skirted the Scottish coast, visiting the Buller of Buchan and other remarkable objects — went to Shetland — thence to Orkney — from thence round Cape Wrath to the Hebrides, making

Digitized by Google

descents everywhere, where there was anything to be seen—thence to Lewis and the Long Island—to Skye—to Iona—and so forth, lingering among the Hebrides as long as we could. Then we stood over to the coast of Ireland, and visited the Giant's Causeway and Port Rush, where Dr Richardson, the inventor (discoverer, I would say) of the celebrated fiorin grass, resides. By the way, he is a chattering charlatan, and his fiorin a mere humbug. But if he were Cicero, and his invention were potatoes, or anything equally useful, I should detest the recollection of the place and the man, for it was there I learned the death of my friend. Adieu, my dear Morritt; kind compliments to your lady; like poor Tom, 'I cannot daub it farther.' When I hear where you are, and what you are doing, I will write you a more cheerful epistle. Poor Mackenzie, too, is gone—the brother of our friend Lady Hood—and another Mackenzie, son to the Man of Feeling. So short time have I been absent, and such has been the harvest of mortality among those whom I regarded!

"I will attend to your corrections in Waverley. My principal employment for the autumn will be reducing the knowledge I have acquired of the localities of the islands into scenery and stage-room for the 'Lord of the Isles,' of which renowned romance

Digitized by Google

I think I have repeated some portions to you. It was elder born than Rokeby, though it gave place to it in publishing.

"After all, scribbling is an odd propensity. I don't believe there is any ointment, even that of the Edinburgh Review, which can cure the infected. Once more yours entirely,

WALTER SCOTT."

Before I pass from the event which made August 1814 so black a month in Scott's calendar, I may be excused for once more noticing the kind interest which the Duchess of Buccleuch had always taken in the fortunes of the Ettrick Shepherd, and introducing a most characteristic espistle which she received from him a few months before her death. The Duchess—"fearful" (as she said) "of seeing herself in print"—did not answer the Shepherd, but forwarded his letter to Scott, begging him to explain that circumstances did not allow the Duke to concede what he requested, but to assure him that they both retained a strong wish to serve him whenever a suitable opportunity should present itself. Hogg's letter was as follows:—

Digitized by Google

"*To her Grace the Duchess of Buccleuch, Dalkeith Palace. Favoured by Messrs Grieve and Scott, hatters, Edinburgh.*"*

"Ettrickbank, March 17, 1814.

"May it please your Grace,

"I have often grieved you by my applications for this and that. I am sensible of this, for I have had many instances of your wishes to be of service to me, could you have known what to do for that purpose. But there are some eccentric characters in the world, of whom no person can judge or know what will prove beneficial, or what may prove their bane. I have again and again received of your Grace's private bounty, and though it made me love and respect you the more, I was nevertheless grieved at it. It was never your Grace's money that I wanted, but the honour of your countenance; indeed my heart could never yield to the hope of being patronised by any house save that of Buccleuch, whom I deemed bound to cherish every plant that indicated anything out of the common way on the Braes of Ettrick and Yarrow.

"I know you will be thinking that this long preclude is to end with a request. No, Madam! I

* Mr Grieve was a man of cultivated mind and generous disposition, and a most kind and zealous friend of the Shepherd.

Digitized by Google

have taken the resolution of never making another request. I will, however, tell you a story, which is, I believe, founded on a fact:—

"There is a small farm at the head of a water called * * * * *, possessed by a mean fellow named * * * *. A third of it has been taken off and laid into another farm—the remainder is as yet unappropriated. Now, there is a certain poor bard, who has two old parents, each of them upwards of eighty-four years of age; and that bard has no house nor home to shelter those poor parents in, or cheer the evening of their lives. A single line from a certain very great and very beautiful lady, to to a certain Mr Riddle,* would ensure that small pendicle to the bard at once. But she will grant no such thing! I appeal to your Grace if she is not a very bad lady that? I am your Grace's ever obliged and grateful JAMES HOGG,

THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD."

Though the Duke of Buccleuch would not dismiss a poor tenant merely because Hogg called him "a mean fellow," he had told Scott that if he could find an unappropriated "pendicle," such as this letter referred to, he would most willingly bestow it on the Shepherd. It so happened, that when Scott paid his first visit at Bowhill after the death of the

* Major Riddell, the Duke's Chamberlain at Branksome Castle.

Digitized by Google

Duchess, the Ettrick Shepherd was mentioned :— "My friend," said the Duke, "I must now consider this poor man's case as *her* legacy;" and to this feeling Hogg owed, very soon afterwards, his establishment at Altrive, on his favourite Braes of Yarrow.

As Scott passed through Edinburgh on his return from his voyage, the negotiation as to the Lord of the Isles, which had been protracted through several months, was completed— Constable agreeing to give fifteen hundred guineas for one half of the copyright, while the other moiety was retained by the author. The sum mentioned had been offered by Constable at an early stage of the affair, but it was not until now accepted, in consequence of the earnest wish of Scott and Ballantyne to saddle the publisher of the new poem with part of their old "quire stock,"— which, however, Constable ultimately persisted in refusing. It may easily be believed that John Ballantyne's management of money matters during Scott's six weeks' absence had been such as to render it doubly convenient for the Poet to have this matter settled on his arrival in Edinburgh—and it may also be supposed that the progress of Waverley during that interval had tended to put the chief parties in good humour with each other.

In returning to Waverley, I must observe most distinctly that nothing can be more unfounded than the statement which has of late years been frequently

Digitized by Google

repeated in memoirs of Scott's life, that the sale of the first edition of this immortal Tale was slow. It appeared on the 7th of July, and the whole impression (1000 copies) had disappeared within five weeks; an occurrence then unprecedented in the case of an anonymous novel, put forth, at what is called among publishers, *the dead season*. A second edition, of 2000 copies, was at least projected by the 24th of the same month,*—that appeared before the end of August, and it too had gone off so rapidly, that when Scott passed through Edinburgh, on his way from the Hebrides, he found Constable eager to treat, on the same terms as before, for a third of 1000 copies. This third edition was published in October, and when a fourth of the like extent was called for in November, I find Scott writing to John Ballantyne—"I suppose Constable won't quarrel with a work on which he has netted £612 in four months, with a certainty of making it £1000 before the year is out;" and, in fact, owing to the diminished expense of advertising, the profits of this fourth edition were to each party £440. To avoid recurring to these details, I may as well state at once that a fifth edition of 1000 copies appeared in January 1815; a sixth of 1500 in June 1816; a seventh of 2000 in October 1817; an eighth of 2000 in April 1821; that in the collective editions,

* See letter to Mr Morritt, *ante*, p. 245.

Digitized by Google

prior to 1829, 11,000 were disposed off; and that the sale of the current edition, with notes, begun in 1829, has already reached 40,000 copies. Well might Constable regret that he had not ventured to offer £1000 for the whole copyright of Waverley!

I must now look back for a moment to the history of the composition.—The letter of September 1810 was not the only piece of discouragement which Scott had received, during the progress of Waverley, from his first confidant. James Ballantyne, in his deathbed *memorandum*, says—"When Mr Scott first questioned me as to my hopes of him as a novelist, it somehow or other did chance that they were not very high. He saw this, and said—'Well, I don't see why I should not succeed as well as other people. At all events, faint heart never won fair lady—tis only trying.' When the first volume was completed, I still could not get myself to think much of the Waverley-Honour scenes; and in this I afterwards found that I sympathized with many. But, to my utter shame be it spoken, when I reached the exquisite descriptions of scenes and manners at Tully-Veolan, what did I do but pronounce them at once to be utterly vulgar! When the success of the work so entirely knocked me down as a man of taste, all that the good-natured author said was—'Well, I really thought you were wrong about the Scotch. Why, Burns, by his poetry, had already attracted

Digitized by Google

universal attention to every thing Scottish, and I confess I could'nt see why I should not be able to keep the flame alive, merely because I wrote Scotch in prose, and he in rhyme.' "—It is, I think, very agreeable to have this manly avowal to compare with the delicate allusion which Scott makes to the affair in his Preface to the Novel.

The only other friends originally intrusted with his secret appear to have been Mr Erskine and Mr Morritt. I know not at what stage the former altered the opinion which he formed on seeing the tiny fragment of 1805. The latter did not, as we have seen, receive the book until it was completed; but he anticipated, before he closed the first volume, the station which public opinion would ultimately assign to Waverley. "How the story may continue," Mr Morritt then wrote, "I am not able to divine; but, as far as I have read, pray let us thank you for the Castle of Tully-Veolan, and the delightful drinking-bout at Lucky Mac-Leary's, for the characters of the Laird of Balmawhapple and the Baron of Bradwardine; and no less for Davie Gelatly, whom I take to be a transcript of William Rose's motley follower, commonly yclept Caliban.*

* This alludes to some mummery in which David Hinves, of merry memory, wore a Caliban-like disguise. He lived more than forty years in the service of Mr W. S. Rose, and died in it last year. Mr Rose was of course extremely young

Digitized by Google

If the completion be equal to what we have just devoured, it deserves a place among our standard works far better than its modest appearance and anonymous titlepage will at first gain it in these days of prolific story-telling. Your manner of narrating is so different from the slipshod sauntering verbiage of common novels, and from the stiff, precise, and prim sententiousness of some of our female moralists, that I think it can't fail to strike anybody who knows what style means; but, amongst the

---

when he first picked up Hinves — a bookbinder by trade, and a preacher among the Methodists. A sermon heard casually under a tree in the New Forest, had such touches of good feeling and broad humour, that the young gentleman promoted him to be his valet on the spot. He was treated latterly more like a friend than a servant, by his master, and by all his master's intimate friends. Scott presented him with a copy of all his works; and Coleridge gave him a corrected (or rather an altered) copy of Christabelle, with this inscription on the fly-leaf: "Dear Hinves, — Till this book is concluded, and with it 'Gundimore, a poem, by the same author,' accept of this *corrected* copy of Christabelle as a *small* token of regard; yet such a testimonial as I would not pay to any one I did not esteem, though he were an emperor. Be assured I shall send you for your private library, every work I have published (if there be any to be had) and whatever I shall publish. Keep steady to the FAITH. If the fountainhead be always full, the stream cannot be long empty. Yours sincerely,

11th Nov. 1816 — Muddeford. S. T. COLERIDGE."

Mr Rose imagines that the warning "keep steady to the faith," was given in allusion to Ugo Foscolo's "supposed licence in religious opinions." *Rhymes* (Brighton 1837) p. 92. [1839.]

Digitized by Google

gentle class, who swallow every blue-backed book in a circulating library for the sake of the story, I should fear half the knowledge of nature it contains, and all the real humour, may be thrown away. Sir Everard, Mrs Rachael, and the Baron, are, I think, in the first rank of portraits for nature and character; and I could depone to their likeness in any court of taste. The ballad of St Swithin, and scraps of *old songs*, were measures of danger if you meant to continue your concealment; but, in truth, you wear your disguise something after the manner of Bottom the weaver; and in spite of you the truth will soon peep out." And next day he resumes,—"We have finished Waverley, and were I to tell you all my admiration, you would accuse me of complimenting. You have quite attained the point which your *postscript-preface* mentions as your object—the discrimination of Scottish character, which had hitherto been slurred over with clumsy national daubing." He adds, a week or two later,—"After all, I need not much thank you for your confidence. How could you have hoped that I should not discover you? I had heard you tell half the anecdotes before—some turns you owe to myself; and no doubt most of your friends must have the same sort of thing to say."

Monk Lewis's letter on the subject is so short, that I must give it as it stands:—

Digitized by Google

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Abbotsford.*

"The Albany, Aug. 17, 1814.

"My Dear Scott,

"I return some books of yours which you lent me '*sixty years since*'—and I hope they will reach you safe. I write in great haste; and yet I must mention, that hearing 'Waverley' ascribed to you, I bought it, and read it with all impatience. I am now told it is not yours, but William Erskine's. If this is so, pray tell him from me that I think it excellent in every respect, and that I believe every word of it. Ever yours, M. G. LEWIS."

Another friend (and he had, I think, none more dear), the late Margaret Maclean Clephane of Torloisk, afterwards Marchioness of Northampton, writes thus from Kirkness, in Kinross-shire, on the 11th October:—"In this place I feel a sort of pleasure, not unallied to pain, from the many recollections that every venerable tree, and every sunny bank, and every honeysuckle bower, occasions; and I have found something here that speaks to me in the voice of a valued friend—*Waverley*. The question that rises, it is perhaps improper to give utterance to. If so, let it pass as an exclamation.—Is it possible that Mr Erskine can have written it? The poetry

Digitized by Google

I think, would prove a different descent in any court in Christendom. The turn of the phrases in many places is so peculiarly yours, that I fancy I hear your voice repeating them; and there wants but verse to make all Waverley an enchanting poem — varying to be sure from grave to gay, but with so deepening an interest as to leave an impression on the mind that few — very few poems — could awaken. But, why did not the author allow me to be his Gaelic Dragoman? Oh! Mr ——, whoever you are, you might have safely trusted — M. M. C."

There was one person with whom it would, of course, have been more than vain to affect any concealment. On the publication of the third edition, I find him writing thus to his brother Thomas, who had by this time gone to Canada as paymaster of the 70th regiment: — "Dear Tom, a novel here, called Waverley, has had enormous success. I sent you a copy, and will send you another, with the Lord of the Isles, which will be out at Christmas. The success which it has had, with some other circumstances, has induced people

> 'To lay the bantling at a certain door,
> Where lying store of faults, they'd fain heap more.

You will guess for yourself how far such a report has credibility; but by no means give the weight of your opinion to the Transatlantic public; for you

Digitized by Google

must know there is also a counter-report, that *you* have written the said Waverley. Send me a novel intermixing your exuberant and natural humour, with any incidents and descriptions of scenery you may see — particularly with characters and traits of manners. I will give it all the cobbling that is necessary, and, if you do but exert yourself, I have not the least doubt it will be worth £500; and, to encourage you, you may, when you send the MS., draw on me for £100, at fifty days' sight — so that your labours will at any rate not be quite thrown away. You have more fun and descriptive talent than most people; and all that you want — *i. e.* the mere practice of composition — I can supply, or the devil's in it. Keep this matter a dead secret, and look knowing when Waverley is spoken of. If you are not Sir John Falstaff, you are as good a man as he, and may therefore face Colville of the Dale. You may believe I don't want to make you the author of a book you have never seen; but if people will, upon their own judgment, suppose so, and also on their own judgment give you £500 to try your hand on a novel, I don't see that you are a pin's-point the worse. Mind that your MS. attends the draft. I am perfectly serious and confident, that in two or three months you might clear the cobs. I beg my compliments to the hero who is afraid of Jeffrey's scalping-knife."

Digitized by Google

In truth, no one of Scott's intimate friends ever had, or could have had, the slightest doubt as to the parentage of Waverley: nor, although he abstained from communicating the fact formally to most of them, did he ever affect any real concealment in the case of such persons; nor, when any circumstance arose which rendered the withholding of direct confidence on the subject incompatible with perfect freedom of feeling on both sides, did he hesitate to make the avowal.

Nor do I believe that the mystification ever answered much purpose, among literary men of eminence beyond the circle of his personal acquaintance. But it would be difficult to suppose that he had ever wished that to be otherwise; it was sufficient for him to set the mob of readers at gaze, and above all, to escape the annoyance of having productions, actually known to be his, made the daily and hourly topics of discussion in his presence.

Mr Jeffrey had known Scott from his youth — and, in reviewing Waverley, he was at no pains to conceal his conviction of its authorship. He quarrelled, as usual, with carelessness of style, and some inartificialities of plot, but rendered justice to the substantial merits of the work, in language which I shall not mar by abridgment. The Quarterly was far less favourable in its verdict. Indeed, the articles on Waverley, and afterwards on Guy Mannering,

Digitized by Google

which appeared in that journal, will bear the test of ultimate opinion as badly as any critical pieces which our time has produced. They are written in a captious, cavilling strain of quibble, which shows as complete blindness to the essential interest of the narrative, as the critic betrays on the subject of the Scottish dialogue, which forms its liveliest ornament, when he pronounces that to be "a dark dialogue of Anglified Erse." With this remarkable exception, the professional critics were, on the whole, not slow to confess their belief, that, under a hackneyed name and trivial form, there had at last appeared a work of original creative genius, worthy of being placed by the side of the very few real masterpieces of prose fiction. Loftier romance was never blended with easier, quainter humour, by Cervantes himself. In his familiar delineations, he had combined the strength of Smollett with the native elegance and unaffected pathos of Goldsmith; in his darker scenes, he had revived that real tragedy which appeared to have left our stage with the age of Shakspeare; and elements of interest so diverse had been blended and interwoven with that nameless grace, which, more surely perhaps than even the highest perfection in the command of any one strain of sentiment, marks the master-mind cast in Nature's most felicitous mould.

Scott, with the consciousness (avowed long after-

Digitized by Google

wards in his General Preface) that he should never in all likelihood have thought of a Scotch novel had he not read Maria Edgeworth's exquisite pieces of Irish character, desired James Ballantyne to send her a copy of Waverley on its first appearance, inscribed "from the author." Miss Edgeworth, whom Scott had never then seen, though some literary correspondence had passed between them, thanked the nameless novelist, under cover to Ballantyne, with the cordial generosity of kindred genius; and the following answer, not from Scott, but from Ballantyne—(who had kept a copy, now before me)—is not to be omitted:—

"*To Miss Edgeworth, Edgeworthstown, Ireland.*

"Edinburgh, 11th November 1814.

"Madam,

"I am desired by the Author of Waverley to acknowledge, in his name, the honour you have done him by your most flattering approbation of his work—a distinction which he receives as one of the highest that could be paid him, and which he would have been proud to have himself stated his sense of, only that being *impersonal*, he thought it more respectful to require my assistance than to write an anonymous letter.

"There are very few who have had the opportu-

Digitized by Google

nities that have been presented to me, of knowing how very elevated is the admiration entertained by the Author of Waverley for the genius of Miss Edgeworth. From the intercourse that took place betwixt us while the work was going through my press, *I know* that the exquisite truth and power of your characters operated on his mind at once to excite and subdue it. He felt that the success of his book was to depend upon the characters, much more than upon the story; and he entertained so just and so high an opinion of your eminence in the management of both, as to have strong apprehensions of any comparison which might be instituted betwixt his picture and story and yours; besides, that there is a richness and *naïveté* in Irish character and humour, in which the Scotch are certainly defective, and which could hardly fail, as he thought, to render his delineations cold and tame by the contrast. 'If I could but hit Miss Edgeworth's wonderful power of vivifying all her persons, and making them live as *beings* in your mind, I should not be afraid:'—Often has the Author of Waverley used such language to me; and I knew that I gratified him most when I could say, —'Positively this *is* equal to Miss Edgeworth.' You will thus judge, Madam, how deeply he must feel such praise as you have bestowed upon his efforts. I believe he himself thinks the Baron the best drawn character in his book — I mean the

Digitized by Google

Bailie—honest Bailie Macwheeble. He protests it is the most *true*, though from many causes he did not expect it to be the most popular. It appears to me, that amongst so many splendid portraits, all drawn with such strength and truth, it is more easy to say which is your favourite, than which is best. Mr Henry Mackenzie agrees with you in your objection to the resemblance to Fielding. He says, you should never be forced to recollect, *maugre* all its internal evidence to the contrary, that such a work is a work of fiction, and all its fine creations but of air. The character of Rose is less finished than the author had at one period intended; but I believe the characters of humour grew upon his liking, to the prejudice, in some degree, of those of a more elevated and sentimental kind. Yet what can surpass Flora, and her gallant brother?

"I am not authorized to say—but I will not resist my impulse to say to Miss Edgeworth, that another novel, descriptive of more ancient manners still, may be expected ere long from the Author of Waverley. But I request her to observe, that I say this in strict confidence—not certainly meaning to exclude from the knowledge of what will give them pleasure, her respectable family.

"Mr Scott's poem, the Lord of the Isles, promises fully to equal the most admired of his productions. It is, I think, equally powerful, and certainly

Digitized by Google

more uniformly polished and sustained. I have seen three cantos. It will consist of six.

"I have the honour to be, Madam, with the utmost admiration and respect,

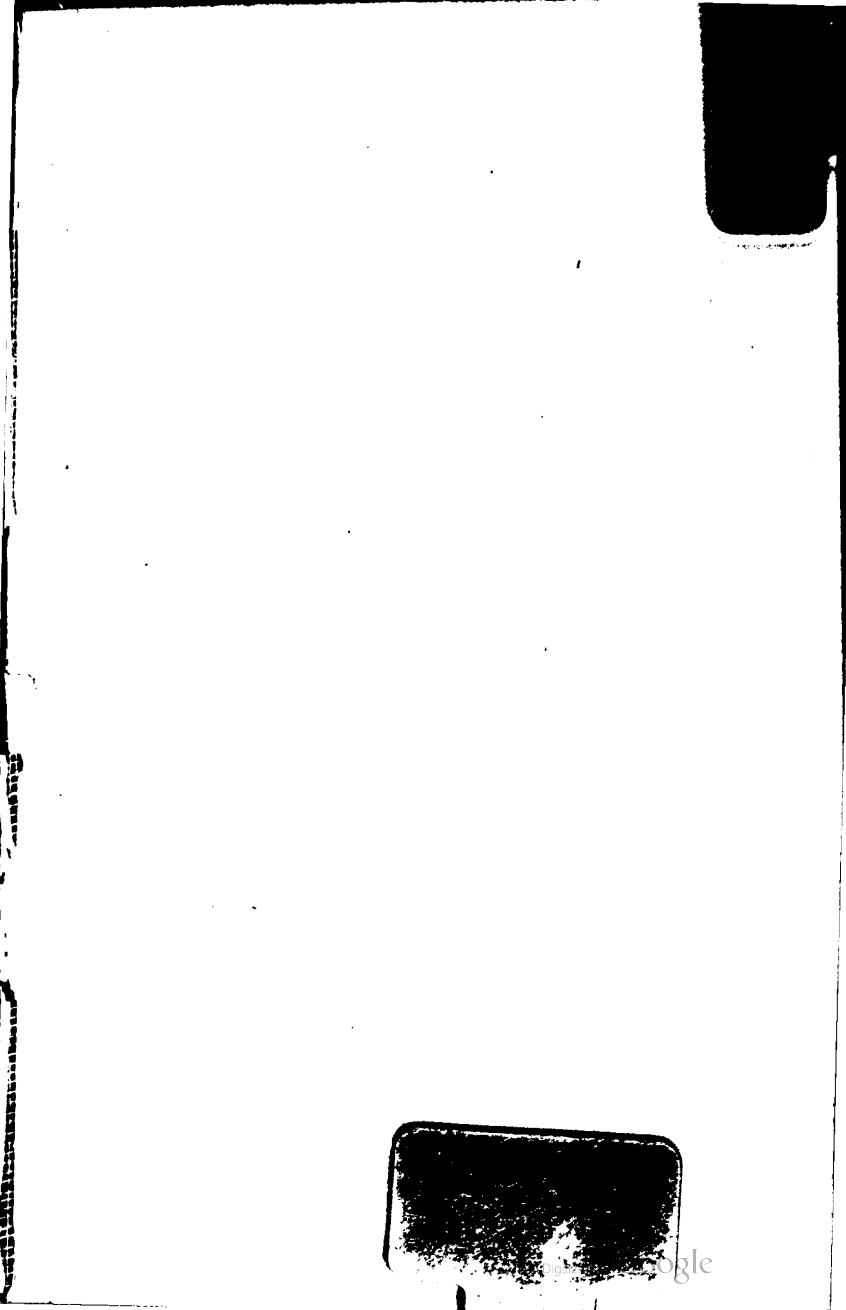
Your most obedient
and most humble servant,
JAMES BALLANTYNE."

END OF VOL. IV.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google


Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google